

Posters are a visual presentation of information and generally intended to stimulate the audience's interest and encourage further discussion. It should be visually attractive whilst communicating information in a brief yet meaningful way. Consider it more like an abstract, as opposed to simply reproducing an essay in a poster format. It is therefore important not to bog down the poster with too much text and information. Ensure you are clear about what the main points and conclusions are, and what you want the overall message to be.

Tools

PowerPoint software can be used to design your poster and there are many websites and online tutorials that offer advice on how to do so in this way. Here are a couple of suggestions:

University of Bristol - PowerPoint XP (2002) for academic posters practical workbook (pdf): <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/is/learning/documentation/pptxp-3/pptxp-3t.pdf>

University of Northern Colorado - Making an academic research poster using PowerPoint (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqgigwIXadA>

General Guidance

- Make sure the overall message is clear, with an introduction, main body and a conclusion.
- A border around the poster will help to frame your work.
- To help the audience follow the flow of information on your poster, use arrows, lines, or numbers.
- Include enough blank space to prevent the poster looking too busy. Blank space is a very effective means of highlighting important information, it draws the audience in.
- Display information in columns as opposed to rows; this will make it easier to read. Somewhere between 3 and 4 columns in a landscape poster is generally suitable. You could also display the information in cells, but remember to be clear about the sequence.

Text

- Limit the amount of text on your poster and avoid long continuous blocks of text. No more than about 500 words. Keep it simple and it will be more eye-catching!

- Text should be legible from a distance of around 2 metres. General guidelines suggest that main titles should be in a font size of at least 96, subheadings should be at least 30, and the main body of text should be a minimum of 18. Keep in mind that font styles can vary widely in size.
- Consider the readability of the font you choose and try to use no more than two within your design. Generally, sans serif fonts are more readable. Suggested fonts are Arial, Verdana, Times New Roman, and Tahoma.
- Be hierarchical; use larger text for more important information.
- Limit the use of **bold**, underline, and italic. They will have more impact when used sparingly. CAPITALISING text can come across as shouting, so consider this when using.
- When formatting your paragraphs, justified text is generally more aesthetic, but be careful not to have too many large gaps between words. Left-justified is also suitable.
- Avoid single words on the last line of paragraphs, as they are not pleasing to the eye.
- Use bullet points, diagrams, and graphs to summarise findings and make the information more concise and clear. This will help to reduce the amount of text.
- Consider who your audience is. Will they understand it? Avoid using too much jargon, abbreviations or acronyms.

Colour

- It is important to have enough contrast between the text and background. Dark text over a light background is generally more readable.
- Don't use too many colours! Stick to a theme of 2 or 3 colours and keep them balanced and consistent across the poster.
- Consider your use of certain colours. Some people cannot distinguish green from red.

Graphics

- If a section of text can be displayed in a visual format (a graph or image), do so. Posters should be visual and the use of graphics to tell the story will help to draw in an audience.
- However, only use graphics that are relevant. Remember not to crowd your poster with too many confusing images. They could look cluttered and distract the audience from the overall message.
- If including text on your graphics, ensure it is readable (consider the contrast between text and image, and the size).

- Use graphics as appropriate. It is the responsibility of the author to seek permission to publish any images before they are submitted.

References

- Edinburgh Napier University, 2009. *Academic Posters*. [online] Available at: <http://www2.napier.ac.uk/gus/writing_presenting/academic_posters.html#graphics> [Accessed 27 October 2010].
- Hess, G.R., Tosney, K., and Liegel, L., 2006. *Creating Effective Poster Presentations*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters>> [Accessed 27 October 2010].
- Radel, J., 1999. *Designing Effective Posters*. [online] Available at: <http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Poster_Presentations/PstrStart.html> [Accessed 27 October 2010].
- University of Adelaide, 2009. *Academic Learning and Language – Learning Guide: Academic Posters*. [online] Available at: <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/all/learning_guides/learningGuide_academicPosters.pdf> [Accessed 27 October 2010].
- University of Essex, 2006. *Posters*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.essex.ac.uk/myskills/skills/presentations/doingPosterPres.asp>> [Accessed 27 October 2010].
- University of Leicester, 2007. *Designing a Poster*. [online] Available at: <<http://connect.le.ac.uk/posters>> [Accessed 28 October 2010].
- University of Melbourne, 2009. *Academic Posters*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/download/Presentation-AcademicPostersNew.pdf>> [Accessed 28 October 2010].