



PRESENTING — THE PERFECT — POSTER

Tips for creating an impactful and memorable poster

We've all seen them: the academic conference posters with tiny text, confusing layouts, and questionable color palettes. They can be hard on the eyes and the head! But now there's no reason that you can't create a poster that will be the talk of the conference—in a good way—and the envy of all the other presenters! It's time to step up your game with these tips for creating great posters.

CONTENT



Keep it tight: You've created your content, now see how many words you can cut. You'll need to be brutal. The ideal ratio of graphics to text is around 50:50. Arrange experiments to best support your story, not necessarily in the order they were performed.

Capture attention: Think of your poster title as an advertisement for your poster, rather than a condensed version of the content. Avoid acronyms and jargon when possible.

In conclusion: Use a bulleted list limited to 4–5 summary statements in the conclusion section. Statements should encapsulate the meaning of your data and its wider implications. Be sure that your conclusion directly addresses the hypothesis from your introduction or abstract.

Take a test ride: Project your poster on a wall and take a dry run through your presentation with your colleagues. They may have questions that you need to clarify in your content. Be ready to edit as necessary.

Stay in touch: Don't forget to include your contact details, especially an email address.

IMAGES



Data titles tell a story: Always title your images to quickly provide viewers with your data "take away" message.

Talk about methods: Provide a simple description of the experimental methods used to get the data you're presenting near the actual image.

Be obvious: Label your axes clearly and definitively. Place your data near their descriptions in the poster's text so viewers don't have to figure them out.

Data strength: Include enough data to defend your hypothesis. If you removed all the text and left only the data, would your viewers still get the whole story? They should!

Make it easy: As a general rule, graphs are easier on the viewer than tables.

Clean it up: Remove unneeded backgrounds, colors, and lines from your data.



DESIGN

Getting started: Check dimensions to make sure your poster conforms to the meeting's size and orientation specifications.

Column width: Narrow columns of text are easier to read than wide columns. Use four columns of text for a landscape orientation, and make sure that text boxes in all columns are evenly spaced and aligned.

Text justification: Avoid creating distracting vertical "rivers" of white space caused by using full justification of text (i.e., justifying text on both the right and left). For an easier read, always use left-justified text.

Font usage: Try using a serif font like Times New Roman or Garamond for the titles and sans serif fonts like Helvetica or Gill Sans for the body. Avoid novelty fonts like Comic Sans or Hobo, and never use more than two or three fonts. Suggested font sizes: 85 pt for the title, 36–44 pt for the headers, and 24–34 pt for the body text.

Emphasize this: Best not to shout at viewers by using ALL CAPS in your poster titles or text. If you wish to emphasize a word or sentence, choose just one style: boldface, italics, or underline.

Special FX: Color gradients, puckered text, drop shadows, etc. have their place. Just not in your poster.

Color palette: For the greatest impact, choose just a few colors and use them consistently throughout your poster. You might consider using colors from your organization logo, or try using an online resource for color inspiration [see resources]. While color is fine for titles, always use black for body text.

Don't bury your conclusion: Instead of the usual lower right-hand placement, try positioning your conclusions at the top of the leftmost or rightmost column.

Size matters: Be sure you haven't used a low-resolution image. Image resolution for printed materials should be a minimum of 150 DPI, ideal is 300 DPI.



RESOURCES

Check out these websites for more great tips to make poster creation even easier:

- colourlovers.com/palettes
- makesigns.com
- betterposters.blogspot.com
- colinpurrington.com
- bandwidthonline.org

Want even more help?

PosterGenius® software is a user-friendly application that combines a series of automations with 100+ professionally designed templates to help you create your best looking scientific poster.

Find out more at: poster-genius.com

