



Academic Posters: tips and tricks for our upcoming Conference

Often, presenters at conferences will be asked to share their research in the form of a poster. This may sound daunting if you've never made an academic poster before, so we've put together a handy guide to help you.

Online audience: remember that your poster will be viewed online and therefore design and adjust your layout accordingly. Consider that people in the majority will be using laptops or phones to view your work.

Keep your title short and interest grabbing. You can add a longer subtitle in a smaller font, but make sure that your main title will draw the attention and interest of other conference attendees. Keep it the same as your submitted abstract and use it to inspire interest in your reader.

Word count should be relatively low. Stick to around 300–800 words and use those words to really get your point across! You can make use of bullet points, numbers and headlines to help break up the text. This makes your poster easier to read, and also means that you'll use less words overall.

Answer the important questions. The word count for a poster is significantly lower than for many papers and other presentations. Focus on the most important elements of your topic and share that in a visual way.

Include your name, acknowledgements, and institutional affiliation. These are often found just under the title. Reference any outside research you include using a box in the bottom corner of your poster.

Headings, bullet points and numbers: using techniques like subtitles, bullet points and headlines will allow people to digest your work without being overwhelmed by the amount of text.

Layout: the layout of your poster will rely on your subject matter (like use of graphs, images, tables, etc). A typical layout often includes:


- Title (same as submitted abstract)
- Name/ Campus/ Job role
- Introduction
- Results
- Discussion
- References
- Acknowledgements

EXAMPLES:

Your Title Should Fit On One Line, size 105

Name and Institution, size 63


Contact Information



Introduction, size 68

Before designing your poster, consider your goal. Are you providing information, raising awareness of an issue, changing an opinion, or something else? What is the desired effect of your message? Use your goal to guide your decisions about what is the most important information and how to display it.

Your message's effect is influenced by your audience, the environment in which it is delivered, and its design features. For example, are you presenting to experts or a mixed audience? You will need to tailor your content to suit your particular audience's values and needs. Also consider the environment: Will your poster be one in ten or one in fifty? How much do you need to stand out? Will you stand by your poster to explain it in person, or will it stand alone?



Design Principles

Contrast, size 36
Use contrast in style to communicate an organized hierarchy of information and to guide your viewer's eye, size 32

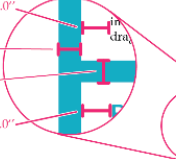
- Consider using a contrasting font for your header.
- You can also use size, italics, bolding, and color coding to increase contrast between pieces of text.
- Avoid black type on darkly colored backgrounds, or white type on light-colored backgrounds.

Repetition
Repeat visual elements such as color, shapes, textures, borders, and fonts to unify the poster.

- Make sure all headers are the same font size.
- Make sure spacing between elements is consistent.


Alignment
Check for horizontal and vertical alignment.

By zooming in 100% or more, you can more easily check margins as well as inter marginal space. White padding around text makes it easier to read.



Proximity
Placing elements close together creates a relationship between them. Try to create visual units using close proximity. For example, the image above goes with 'Alignment' not 'Proximity' because it is slightly closer to the alignment text.

Enclosures also help create relationships. If you have a lot of information consider adding white boxes or outlines to delineate information. Proximity is especially important for graphs. Make sure you give graphs and charts enough space above and below them.



Software Options

Id Adobe InDesign
If you have time, learn it. InDesign is the best for layout, text, and image handling.


Ai Adobe Illustrator
A good alternative to InDesign. Illustrator has great alignment tools and working with layers makes designing posters much easier.

P PowerPoint / Google Slides / Keynote
You can do a lot with slideshow programs! But, some have limited alignment tools.

Images

Use images 300dpi or larger. If using another person's image, make sure to cite the source.

To proportionately scale an image, press and hold shift while dragging a corner.



Resources


DesignLab Resources Webpage
<http://designlabresources.wisc.edu>

Designing Conference Posters: Blog post by Colin Pizzurton
<http://colinpizzurton.com/2012/04/01/designing-conference-posters/>

This is not to be taken too literally. Just don't use the text as a checklist.

Acknowledgments

If you need any help with your poster—from the first concept to final revisions—connect with the DesignLab!



© 2020 UW-Madison DesignLab

Creating a Conference Poster

Megan Schlanker, ClfA Early Careers Special Interest Group

Background

A good conference poster should be easy to read from a distance or on a computer screen. This example will demonstrate how to create a conference poster that is attention grabbing and cleanly organised.

Results

If you are presenting research, think about how you can show your findings and results visually - make use of graphs and other images.

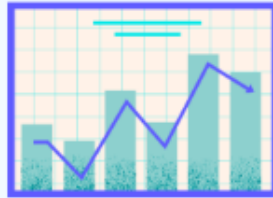


Figure 1. an example of the type of graphic you might use

Discussion

You can break up the text using:

- Bullet points
- Numbers
- Headings

Don't be afraid to use pictures to illustrate your points as well!



Figure 2. The author on her first field school in 2017.

Conclusion

Don't forget to share the most important things about your topic or the most interesting findings from your research. To conclude, you can now go out and create a wonderful poster!

References

- 1 Reference anything from an external source

Resolution: as your work is being presented online, resolution is a key thing to consider. Blurry images/ text or misjudged formatting will affect the reader and how they approach your research when viewing it.

Use graphics, colours and fonts effectively: You should use graphics like charts and pictures to illustrate your findings, a picture speaks a thousand words! When choosing your colours, make sure that the text is clearly visible on the background it sits on. We've included a colour chart below to help you. It's also worth considering that some people in the audience may be colour-blind, and it is worth avoiding the following colour combinations: red and green; green and brown; blue and purple; green and blue; light green and yellow; blue and grey; green and grey; green and black. Sans Serif fonts such as Arial and Calibri tend to be easier to read than Serif fonts such as Times New Roman.

		Background								
		Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Blue	Violet	Black	White	Gray
Foreground	Red		Poor	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Good	Good	Poor
	Orange	Poor		Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Good	Poor	Poor
	Yellow	Good	Good		Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good
	Green	Poor	Poor	Poor		Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good
	Blue	Poor	Poor	Good	Good		Poor	Poor	Good	Poor
	Violet	Poor	Poor	Good	Poor	Poor		Good	Good	Poor
	Black	Poor	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Good		Good	Poor
	White	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Good	Good	Good		Good
	Gray	Poor	Poor	Good	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Good	

Be consistent: Make sure you're staying consistent in your use of fonts - at most, use two, one for the headings and one for the main body of the text. Also keep your colour use consistent. These tips will make your poster look cleaner and more organised.

Use software like Powerpoint, Google Slides, or a free Canva account: These are either freely available online or commonly installed onto computers. You don't have to use these if you're more comfortable using a different software, but they're a good place to start.