

Suggestions for Creating a Quality Academic Poster

Taken from an article by Steven Block – *Do's and Don't's of Poster Presentation*

Content

- DON'T expect anyone to spend more than 3-5 minutes at your poster. If you can't convey your message clearly in less time than this, chances are you haven't done the job properly.
- DO get right to the heart of the matter. In clear, brief, jargon-free terms, your poster must explain your background information, methodology (if applicable), significance, results and conclusions.
- DON'T use long sections of text lifted directly from your paper – a poster is not a worked over manuscript.
- DO recall that a poster should be accessible. Write plainly, simply and briefly. Stress key results and conclusions. Convey the big picture.
- DON'T leave people wondering about who did this work.
- DO put the names of all the project participants, as well as the faculty mentor. Don't use the same large type size as you do for the title: use something smaller and more discreet.

Readability

- DON'T make the title type size too large or too small
- DO make your title large enough to be read easily from a considerable distance (15-25 ft) without exceeding the width of your poster area. It should never occupy more than two lines. If things don't fit, shorten the title – don't reduce the type size.
- DON'T use too small a type size for your poster. This is the single most common error! Never, ever use 10- or 12- point type. Remember, no one ever complained that someone's poster was too easy to read.
- DO use a type size that can be read easily at a distance of 4 feet. Think of 14- pt. type as being suitable only for the "fine print" and work your way up from there. A type size of 20 pt. (18 if necessary) is about right. Not enough space to fit all your text? Shorten your text!
- DON'T pick a font that is difficult to read. Never handwrite items on your poster.
- DO pick a highly legible font such as Times New Roman.
- DON'T vary type sizes or typefaces excessively throughout the poster. For example, don't use something different for every bit of text and graphics.

- DO design your poster as if you were designing the layout for a magazine or newspaper. Select fonts and sizes that work well together. Strive for consistency, uniformity and a clean readable look.
- DON'T make your reader jump all over the poster area to follow your presentation. Don't segregate your text, figures, and legends in separate areas.
- DO lay out the poster in a logical order, so that reading proceeds in some kind of linear fashion from one segment to the next. The best way to do this is columnar format, so the reader proceeds vertically first, from top to bottom, then left to right. This has the advantage that several people can read your poster at the same time, walking through it from left to right, without having to exchange places. Make sure that all figure legends are located immediately adjacent to the relevant figures.
- DON'T use gratuitous colors. Colors attract attention, but can also detract from your message when misused. Fluorescent (neon) color borders aren't good for posters, and neither are excessive variations in color (the "rainbow look").
- DO use color in your poster, but in a way that helps to convey additional meaning. For color borders, select something that draws attention but doesn't overwhelm. For color artwork, make sure that the colors actually mean something and serve to make useful distinctions. Remember that a lot of people are red/green colorblind.

During the Poster Session

- DON'T stand directly in front of your poster at the session or get too close to it. When engaged in conversation with someone, make sure to avoid accidentally preventing others from viewing your poster.
- DO try to stay close by, but off to the side just a bit, so that passersby can see things and so that you don't block the vision of people already gathered around.