

TOP TEN LIST

TEN BEST WAYS TO PRESENT A BAD SCIENTIFIC POSTER

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R.S. Kirby, September 2007

Top Ten List: Ten Best Ways to Present a Bad Scientific Poster

Number 10

The Devil is in the Details

Never put off until today what you might be able to complete tomorrow.

Large format posters can always be printed in a matter of minutes, at relatively low cost . . . And now that FedEx owns Kinkos, you can pick up your poster when you get there.

If only our personal lives were also so simple!

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Number 9

**You Can Have Any Color, Ma'am,
As Long As It's Black**

Can't afford color? No problem, black and white photographs and data graphics will do just fine.

In fact, print everything on 8.5"x11" pages, and just tack them haphazardly on the poster board. No one will pay any attention to how the poster looks, so you won't have to worry about explaining your fascinating results.

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Number 8

Do Too Many Cooks Spoil the Soup?

No one stays to watch the movie credits at the end of the film. So, to make sure all involved get the credit that is their due, list them all as co-authors, including degrees and affiliations, in the title block of your poster.

Ideally, this should take up at least 1/3 of the entire poster. If it doesn't, print the title in an even larger size font.

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Number 7

Coming Soon, to a Poster-board Near You

No results? No problem! Just use lots of photographs and other interesting but irrelevant graphics.

Some ideas: pictures of your staff, place of work, your daughter or girlfriend, photogenic children who don't really have the condition you are studying, pretty much anything will do in a pinch!



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Number 6

Texts, Contexts, Pretexts, Subtexts

Your poster should make a political statement. Become aggressively argumentative with poster readers who disagree with your methodology or interpretation of study findings.

Make it clear that ideology is more important than science, and that any attendees who try to be impartial are actually lacking a social justice conscience.

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Number 5

Non Compos Mentis

Plans change. In the event that you can't attend the conference, do nothing. No one ever minds having several blank poster boards, even if they add to the conference overhead expense.

We all know how busy you are, and there couldn't possibly be anyone attending the conference who could have stood in for you.

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Number 4

What You See Is What You Got

Proofreading is for fools. If the comprehensive spellcheckers built into Microsoft products can't pick it up, it can't be that important.

It's especially counterproductive to double-check the data reported in statistical tables.




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Number 3

Don't Pay for Anything You Might Get for Free

Once you have posted your poster, your formal work is done. During the author-attended poster session feel free to sit in the lounge drinking coffee.

If anyone has any questions, they can just re-read the poster. To avoid any contact with those interested in your work, make sure you leave your nametag in your room.



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Number 2

Size Matters

If a picture is worth a thousand words, be sure to use well over a thousand words in your poster.

Here are some helpful pointers:



Top Ten List: Ten Best Ways to Present a Bad Scientific Poster

Number 2 (continued)

Size Matters

Can't fit all thousand words in?

No problem, just use a smaller font (6pt is a great choice)! If conference attendees can't read your poster, lend them a magnifying glass or hand them a business card for your consulting ophthalmologist.

SNMS*?

Use acronyms – and since everyone already knows what the letters stand for, there's no need to define them.

***SNMS – acronym for “still need more space”.**

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Number 1

Show Me the Money

Leave out extraneous details. No one wants to read boring discussions of explicit study objectives, hypotheses and research aims, methods, study strengths and weaknesses, or key references. Just focus on the findings, and present these in garish colors and imaginative graphics.



Top Ten List: Ten Best Ways to Present a Bad Scientific Poster

Number 1 (continued)

Show Me the Money

Some helpful pointers:

Pie charts and stacked bar charts are always pleasing, so long as there are at least six categories or trends displayed in each graphic.

Use complicated, multi-layered figures with numerous arrows strategically placed throughout the poster pointed in seemingly random directions. Connect statistical graphics to photographs for an especially pleasing effect.

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Go Forth

If you follow these simple rules, you too can create and present a bad scientific poster!

