



Office of Research, Innovation & Scholarly Endeavors



Posters with impact

Your poster is an *advertisement* for your ideas, findings and techniques and needs to attract readers from a distance in a sea of other displays. It needs to be legible from a reading distance of one or two meters and must be easily assimilated.

Therefore, although it may well have the standard subdivisions (Introduction, Aims, Methods, Results, Conclusions), a good poster is one that transmits its message quickly. This is achieved by emulating the layout of newspapers and magazines, so that your poster is presented with:

- Short and meaningful titles in large type, using upper and lower case, not all capitals.
- Concise content, avoiding information overload.
- Black text on a white background.
- Body text in columns, reading top-to-bottom, left-to-right.
- Short line lengths, 50 characters max including spaces.
- Body text left-aligned only, not 'justified'.
- Plain fonts: Helvetica, Arial, Times New Roman.
- Simplified data sets; graphs rather than tables.
- Photographs and diagrams wherever possible.
- Uniform visually appealing colors, graphics and type.

A poster should never be a whole journal article enlarged for wall display. Journals, posters and on-screen shows have different dynamics; content must be re-worked for the medium to ensure maximum effect. Abstracts, complex tables, statistical intricacies and references belong on a handout, not on your poster.

Before you start

Check the organizers' specifications for maximum poster size. What is the height and width of the allocated display area? Is it landscape (horizontal), portrait (vertical) or square? It's important to note that you don't have to fill the whole space allocated. Production and transportation are simplified by adopting the most common poster size (and that of our templates) which is 36 inches by 48 inches.

If fitting your text, data and figures into this space is difficult, you are presenting too much information.

- Don't 'copy and paste' illustrations, use PowerPoint's 'Insert' menu instead. (Insert/Picture/From File – find the file, select it, and click OK.)
- Beware of resolution overkill with scanners and digital cameras which can result in large file sizes (and therefore enormous PowerPoint documents when imported). An image size of 13cm x 18cm (15in x 7in) at 180dpi is adequate for poster figures.

- If the poster file exceeds 50 megabytes in size, printing problems may occur.
- Images from the Web are usually unsuitable for inclusion in posters as the resolutions are too small.
- Images from scientific graphing programs (Sigma Plot, Prism, SPSS, etc.) and Mac PICT files might look perfect on your screen but can print incorrectly. Such files should be converted to JPEG or TIFF format for insertion into the template.
- Remember not to change the page size after finishing your poster or text and images will move unpredictably.
- On paper, color can look quite different from their on-screen appearance. **Avoid too much color or dark colors.**

Avoiding problems

Posters must be submitted in print-ready form, with all figures already in place. Before submission, do a spell-check and have someone else proof-read your poster. The usual method of submission is USB flash 'thumb' drives.

Minimum font sizes of the various parts of your poster should be:

- Title: 85point (depending on the length of the title).
- Authors and origin: 56pt
- Sub-headings: 36pt
- Body text: 24pt
- Captions: 18pt

Follow the design principles in 'Posters with impact' plus...

- All body text should be the same size and style of font.
- Keep body text left-aligned only. Do not 'justify' (align left and right).
- Columns should not vary in width.
- Leave 'breathing space' around the text. Don't overcrowd the poster.
- Leave at least 2cm between your poster's content and the edge of the page.
- Beware of large vertical posters – your all-important 'Conclusions' could end up at floor level!