

## Preparing Your Poster

1. Start preparing a poster or a talk as early as possible! It will always take more time than you think. Do not wait until the last minute in order to finish one last experiment.
2. Consult regularly with your faculty advisor!
3. Remember that your audience includes students in a wide range of majors. Try to think about what jargon you take for granted, and translate it as much as possible.

The goal of a poster is to turn your work into a self-guided tour that tells the story of your research. Like a talk, posters must catch and maintain the interest of the reader. The information should be primarily visual with limited amounts of text, and text must be readable from 3-4 feet away..

Most posters will be printed in bulk; these must all be 4 feet wide by 3 feet tall. If you have a poster from an earlier event that is a different size, we will accommodate it. Posters will be temporarily attached to foam boards and placed on easels. Foam boards, pins, and clips will be provided at the conference.

Those who choose to prepare posters will stand beside their poster during at least part of the poster sessions and answer questions about it. You will have a chance to meet interesting people, exchange ideas about your project, and converse about other aspects of science. We understand that you have classes and other obligations, so you are not expected to be at all poster sessions. Your poster will remain up from Thursday evening through the end of the conference Friday.

See next three pages for detailed tips!

## Poster Sections

Scientific posters typically feature different sections of content. Below are common categories, in the typical order. People will tend to read from top to bottom within each column, and from left to right. Three columns is a common layout, but adjust based on your specific content.

### HOT TIP:

Avoid large blocks of text wherever possible. Instead, use diagrams, graphs, and photos to convey concepts.

- **Introduction / Background / Goals** – This section is intended to introduce the audience to the question you are attempting to answer or problem you are attempting to solve, and sufficient background from the published literature to provide context and relevance.
- **Methods** – This section outlines or summarizes the key procedures or steps taken for the experiment. It should not include detailed protocols, but a visual overview often in the form of a flow chart.
- **Results** – This section depicts the data resulting from the experiment(s). Typically, this section consists mostly or entirely of graphs, tables and other figures, with figure legends.
- **Conclusions / Discussion** – This section tells the audience what was accomplished and sums up the experiment by making a judgment or decision reached based on logic and reason.
- **Future Directions / Next Steps** – This section informs the audience of where the research could be taken in the future based on what was learned through this experiment. This may be merged with Conclusion/Discussion.
- **References** – The section attributes the sources of any information you have referenced or cited. Your introduction will always require citations.
- **Acknowledgements** – This section thanks contributing people, organizations and/or sponsors, including funders.

# Tips & Tricks for Good Academic Poster Design

Many people think design is an innate talent you are born with, but the truth is good design is achieved by learning a few basic principles and taking the time to attend to the picky details. By following these guidelines, your poster will look great!

**Alignment** – *the principle of alignment refers to lining up the top, bottom, sides, or middle of text or graphic elements on a page*

- Turn content into packages of information that lead the eye from beginning to end.
- Boxes are a good way to contain information, but leave empty space between the text and the box's edges.
- Check your poster to make sure the edges of boxes/ elements align. This will ensure a professional look. (*In PowerPoint: Arrange -> Align or Distribute*)

**Balance** – *the ways in which the elements (lines, shapes, colors, textures, etc.) of a piece are arranged*

- Empty space is your friend! Balance text, images and empty space because a poster that is overcrowded is overwhelming to viewers.
- **Can you easily read large amounts of text on the poster? Probably not and neither can your casually browsing audience! So, format your text in small, consumable packages in the poster.**
- Cut down your text to the bare bone essentials. Reduce and refine!
- Use bullets or lists. Cut paragraphs down to just a few sentences. Use subheadings to break up your text blocks.

**Contrast** – *the arrangement of opposite elements (light vs. dark colors, large vs. small shapes, etc.) in a piece; it is used to direct the viewer's attention to a particular point of interest*

- Bigger things tell the audience what is most important by bringing their eye there first, so use bigger text / graphic elements where you want to draw the viewers' eyes to go first.
- Contrast your text sizes: Headings 56-72pts, Sub-headings 32-48pts, Body text 20-28pts.
- Graphics & pictures are the stars of your show! Feature them prominently by placing large, high-resolution graphics that will draw your viewers in.
- Each graphic needs a title and a description that can be easily read. Descriptions don't need to be as large as body text, but they should be readable if a viewer decides to engage further, and takes a step closer.
- Good fonts for poster design: Times New Roman, Palatino Linotype, **Dyriad Pro**, Arial

**Repetition** – *the use of the same colors, styles, shapes, or other elements and principles throughout a document*

- Less is always better. Limit your text to black or white, and only use 1-2 colors for the backgrounds of boxes.
- Utilize a white background. A background image for the whole poster is terribly distracting.
- Check all body text for readability. Stand back from your poster. Is all the text legible both in size and color contrast?

# Checklist for Good Academic Poster Design

Step back and take a fresh look at your poster. **If you checked any of the highlighted options, you may want to review the *Tips & Tricks for Good Academic Poster Design* to strengthen your design.** You may consider asking a trusted friend to use this checklist to refine your poster design. Be sure to ask your advisor for guidance as well!

## Alignment

- Where does your eye go first? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is that the most important element for viewers to focus on?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- Does your poster tell a sequential story?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- Do your eyes know where to start, where to go next, and where to finish?  No
- Is there anywhere in the sequence where you get lost or confused and don't know where to go next? \_\_\_\_\_ No  Yes, where: \_\_\_\_\_

## Balance

- Is your text quickly digestible?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- Are any of your paragraphs longer than 3-4 sentences? \_\_\_\_\_ No  Yes, then consider breaking them up using subheadings, bullet points or a numerical list.
- Could the message of any of your text be conveyed graphically instead? \_\_\_\_\_ No  Yes, then consider using a diagram or visual to tell the story (examples: timeline, flowchart, vend diagram, concept map/tree, or map).

## Contrast

- Is all of your text readable when you stand back from the poster?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
(Note: Acknowledgements and References can be smaller than the other sections and don't need to be readable at a distance.)

## Repetition

- Are more colors than black, white and two additional colors being used? \_\_\_\_\_ No  Yes o Do your graphic and text boxes align?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- Do all graphic elements/pictures and text boxes have at least a little empty space around them?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
- Are any of your graphics blurry? \_\_\_\_\_ No  Yes, replace with a higher resolution graphic. o Is the title at the top of your paper with the authors' names?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

(Note: If authors are from different institutions, their names should be accompanied by a superscript. Below the list of names, there should be a list of superscripts numbers that indicate the author's department, institution, city & state.)

- Are sponsors' logos at the top of the poster or with the Acknowledgements?  No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes