



OFFICE OF GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

Poster Presentation Best Practices

Poster sessions are a common forum for science communication at conferences. Posters are visual communication tools that aid in telling a concise story and stimulate discussion with the audience.

General Considerations:

- Keep your audience in mind.
 - Is it a general audience? Broad scientific audience? Specialists?
- Focus on a single story.
- Proof-read before printing. Have at least two colleagues give you feedback.

Design Considerations:

- Check on conference site about poster dimensions.
- Use plenty of graphics, flow charts, and images and fewer words and bullet points.
- Leave margins to be able to pin the poster.
- Make effective use of white space.
 - Use the 20:40:40 rule (20% text, 40% graphics, 40% white space).
- Make your text large enough that it can be read from 6 feet away (24+ point font).
- Title should be readable from 20 feet away (60+ point font).
- Make use of subsections for organization. Sections headings readable (48+ point font).

Content:

- **Title**
Write a succinct, but attention-grabbing, title. Don't agonize if it is not splashy!
- **Authorship**
Correctly acknowledge all contributing authors and their institutional affiliations.
- **Background**
Setup your story by establishing the knowledge gap and your hypothesis.
Use images or models.
- **Methods**
Demonstrate why you chose this approach or how your approach is unique.
For standard protocols, just state the name of the technique.
For unique protocols, avoid technical details (use handouts to share details).
Use flow-charts, models, or graphics, as much as possible.
- **Results**
Use data that are relevant to the story and no more.
Use active, not passive, voice.
Keep graphics clean, simple, and easily understood (no unnecessary gridlines).
- **Conclusions and Future Directions**
Use clear and succinct language.
Use same image as in the background to fill the gap (if possible).
Use bullet points sparingly.
- **Acknowledgements, References, and Funding**
List only key references. Correctly acknowledge collaborators and all funding sources.



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Poster Checklist:

- Does my poster attract the viewer's attention?
- Is my poster organized and does it flow easily?
- Is the text easy to read from an appropriate distance (3-5 feet)?
- Is the question/knowledge gap clear?
- Do all of the graphics and images contribute to the story?
- Is the content clear and easy to understand?
- Is there enough detail about methods to understand the results?
- Are the conclusions clearly stated and supported by my results?

Speech:

- Have a rough script of walking attendees through your poster.
- Complement your speech with the poster content. Have two versions of script -
 - a quick version for folks with limited time aka passersby
 - a detailed version for more engaged folks
- Identify questions that will be asked and think of answers in advance.
- Plan for interruptions during talk.
- Plan for other poster presenters also talking around you adding to room noise.
- Prepare by being confident, enthusiastic, and audible.
- Make eye contact with your poster visitor.

Before, during, and after your poster session:

- Have information on display settings (dimensions) from conference planners and check for easels/pushpins.
- Get official program/department/university logo to add to your poster.
- Plan for poster transportation. Consider cloth posters for easy transportation.
- Invite relevant attendees to your poster by emailing in advance or while at the meeting.
- Use it to connect with future employers and advisors.
- If you have movies (or 3D data), plan to have an iPad or laptop to show them.
- Have handouts if needed.
- Take a picture with your poster and promote on social media with conference hashtag.
- Have water, tea, lozenges handy.
- Have business cards ready.
- Take quick notes on attendee names and send personalized thank you notes.
- Connect with visitors on LinkedIn.
- Display your poster in your department hallway for local colleagues to see your work.



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Helpful Poster Design and Presentation Resources:

Poster Printing Locations @UM

Randall Physics Building - Main Campus

https://kb.lsa.umich.edu/lsait/index.php/Poster_Printing

Biological Chemistry - Medical School

<https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/biochem/poster-printing>

University of Michigan Medical School Branding Guidelines

<http://www.med.umich.edu/branding/start-here.html>

University of Michigan Library Guide to Poster Design

<http://guides.lib.umich.edu/poster>

New York University Library Guide to Poster Design

<https://guides.nyu.edu/posters>

NCSU: Creating Effective Poster Presentations

<https://projects.ncsu.edu/project/posters/index.html>

Jean-luc Doumont

Effective Graphical Displays

<http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com/pdfs/TM&Th-4.0-summary.pdf>

Presentation Template

<http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com/pdfs/TM&Th-3.2-template.pdf>

Nature - Presentations: Billboard Science by Kendall Powell

<https://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/articles/10.1038/nj7387-113a>

The Scientist - Poster Perfect by Edyta Zielinska

<https://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/31071/title/Poster-Perfect/>

PLOS Computational Biology - Ten Simple Rules for a Good Poster Presentation by Thomas Erren and Philip Bourne

<http://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.0030102>