A SCHOLAR’S GUIDE TO 
POSTER POWER!
HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR PRESENTATION

1. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A POSTER?
A visual poster & the presentation, or “story-telling” of it, to the scholarly community and/or the public, at a conference or other venue online or face-to-face.

2. WHAT DOES IT DO?
• Summarizes & packages research into a digestible, attractive format
• Provides an informal, intimate platform for communicating one’s research
• Stimulates a scholarly conversation among colleagues and the public

3. WHY DO IT?
• Easier entry into your initial conference presentation experience - potential for waiver of conference fees
• Provides platform for increased collaboration, scholarly conversation, & research impact
• Reaches diverse audiences
• Can be reproduced digitally online & published with a Creative Commons license; increasing visibility, attention & engagement in social media & online researcher communities (altmetrics)

4. HOW DO I MAKE IT?
You need an idea or research question. Then you’ll need a cohesive visual design representing your idea, proposal, research, and/or data. Finally, you’ll need to put it all together into a clear & concise audio-visual (and legible) poster power masterpiece.

5. POSTER ELEMENTS
• Title, authors & collaborators
• Background, literature review
• Research question, theme, concept
• Materials, approach, process, methods, data
• Results and conclusion including main argument, insight or significance of work & future directions
• Acknowledgements, references & contact info
• Copyright (e.g. Creative Commons)
• CREATIVITY!

WHAT MAKES A GOOD POSTER?

VISUAL ELEMENTS
• Selectively communicate aspects of your research within usual poster size of 48” x 36”
• Grab viewer attention
• Add interesting colors & shapes
• Charts, graphs, graphics, diagrams, maps, cartoons, icons, etc.

KEEP PLENTY OF "WHITE" SPACE

COLOR
• Dark print on light background best.
• Be color blind people friendly - no red against green!

CLEAN DESIGN
• columns
• bullets
• numbers
• headlines
• consistency

EASY-TO-READ TEXT (BIG)
• from 3-10 feet
• 300-800 words
• 2-3 fonts
• left-justified

POWERFUL EXAMPLES
F1000Research
Pimp My Poster

BAD EXAMPLE:
http://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design/bad

References

POSTER PRESENTATION 101

1. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
• Know your audience ahead of time - don’t know?
  Ask conference organizers and colleagues
• Prepare for your specific audience
• Check for audience understanding when presenting

Percentage of impairment from fear of public speaking on...

2. USE CLEAR CHARTS


3. PREPARE
• Nothing combats public speaking anxiety like preparation
• Prepare an elevator speech: a 1-2 minute summary of your research in layperson terms. If you need jargon, limit it & define it, please

4. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE
• Practice in front of your mirror, friends & family
• Speak loudly & clearly (but don’t shout)
• Eliminate meaningless transition words like “um,” “OK” “so...”, “like”, etc.

5. BE FLEXIBLE & SHOW YOUR ENTHUSIASM
• Don’t wait for viewers to ask questions. You, as the researcher, should ask first. “I can tell you about my research in 1-2 minutes or less, would you like to hear?”
• Use attention-getting devices in what you present and speak. Ex: an interesting or fun fact
• Humor & enthusiasm about your research goes a long way. Ex: “I promise you won’t be stuck here forever”
• Admit when you don’t know something. Speculate with your audience and ask their opinion

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