An Introduction to Scientific Posters

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Introduce students to the basic principles, objectives, and approaches to creating a scientific poster.

- Objectives, Benefits, Limitations
- Storyboarding
- Format and Design
Provides a concise, visual representation of the research.

- Quickly orients the audience to the subject and purpose of the poster
- Employs clearly labeled sections & subsections to help the audience navigate the poster
- Limited and explicit text so that the poster can be read & understood quickly amid distractions
- Follows a visual logic, with a hierarchical structure that emphasizes and specifically names the main points
- Sections are relatively self-contained so that a viewer could enter the poster at numerous points
Posters & Poster sessions function differently from research papers & formal talks

• Fosters personalized interaction
• Offers a comprehensive representation
• Serves as an excellent format for illustrations & equations
• Functions well as a stand-alone product and as an interactive communication tool
• Works well in-tandem with other communication products
While posters provide some advantages, there are also challenges specific to this format

- The audience is typically not captive
- Space is limited
- Format and design are complex and cannot be plugged into one size fits all templates
- At a session you contend with noise and other distractions, as well as compete with other presenters
- When hung in a hallway or lab, you are often not there to champion, clarify, or defend your work
Identify sections and layout options

- Know the purpose, the audience, and your role
- Recommended sections; Required content
- Specific instructions for a class
- Example content for a conference

Identify appropriate graphics

- Visual content necessary to share the work (photographs, schematics, designs, etc)
- Information that can best conveyed via visual presentation (charts, graphs, tables, etc)
- Visuals that are crisp, clean, and legible at poster scale
Identify your message and map your story

Design Drivers:
- Logical layout
- Reader gravity
- Balance text & graphics holistically & by section
- Flexible design

This diagram illustrates reader gravity, the typical way a Western Language person approaches a page.

Let your STORY & AUDIENCE guide all choices!
Banner Space

- Project Title: don’t use all caps; do use complete thoughts
- All Authors (names & institutions)
- Logos: institutions, funding agencies, partners (some might go in the footer for space)

Common Body Sections

- Abstract / Introduction / Science Background
- Materials & Methods
- Bench Tests / Protocols / Field Work
- Results / Conclusions / Discussions / Future Work
- References & Acknowledgements
Attract an Audience & Orient the Viewer

• Logical & Specific Titles (poster & body sections)
  • Sub-headers, bullets, tables
• State the what (objectives) & the why (context)
• Relevant, Crisp, & Clearly Labeled Graphics
  • Titles, figure numbers, captions, & citations
• Create a reader-gravity conscious layout
• Use of white space, borders, and shading to clearly delineate sections & to reinforce reader-gravity
“Designing Your Text”

• Parallel Design
• 3-6 Foot Rule = Body Fonts no smaller than ~18 pt
  • Title: ~68 pt
  • Headings: ~44 pt
  • Body: ~28 pt
  • Captions: ~20 pt
  • Citations: ~18 pt
• Small Blocks of Text, clean use of white space
  • Tables and bullets when possible/useful
• Readable in 10 minutes or less
• References to visual representations
Incorporating Visuals

• Parallel Design for all elements
  • Consistent placement of headers, subheaders, captions, etc
  • Consistent borders around photos, graphs, charts
• Figure numbers for all graphics; always reference figures directly in the text
• Explicit and concise captions (citations as needed)
• Hi-Resolution Images (800 dpi or higher)
• Do not use images or gradient colors for backgrounds
• Color Guidance:
  • Limit your palette to 2 or 3 colors
  • Dark on Light / Light on Dark
  • Complementary to your Graphics & Logos
Why use PPT when there are so many free design platforms out there?

• Available almost universally on all computers
• User-friendly (or at least user familiarity)
• Compatible with Office Suite
• Easy conversion to PDF
• Reviewers/Authors can easily share in editing
Getting Started in PowerPoint

- **First Step: Slide Dimensions!**
  - Design → Page Set up → Change the Size
  - Typical Poster size: 36” x 48”

- **Boxes, Boxes, Boxes!**
  - Insert → Text Boxes
  - More text boxes makes it easier to modify the layout later

- **Format Shapes & Backgrounds**
  - Right Click → Format Shape or Background
  - Fill (background colors & style)
  - Line Color (borders)
  - Line Style (border thickness)
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Thank you!
Questions?