

Making the most of your conference poster

Dr Krystyna Haq
Graduate Education Officer
Graduate Research School



Why present a conference poster?



Why present a conference poster?



- communicate a message (your research)
- reach a large number of people (potentially)
- obtain feedback
- become known
- network



Challenges faced

- being noticed given
 - lots of other posters
 - many competing distractions including food and drink
 - time slot
 - format of a poster session
- communicating effectively with this medium (visual rather than written)

Some practical things to consider



- size of allocated space
- portability of poster
- ease of assembly
- ease of attachment to poster board
- additional resources (handouts, models, samples, animations etc)?
- should you include your photo?

Some key considerations when designing your poster



- it's about your audience and not about you
- your poster is a visual form of communication
 - layout given size and shape of poster
 - balance of text and graphics
 - can text be replaced by graphics?
- people usually spend little time in front of a poster
- most posters are viewed from a distance of at least 1.5m away



Therefore:

- design poster to be easily seen and easily scanned by eye
- focus on the central question and take-home message (use and repeat key words)
- aim to limit text to 350 words
- use bullets points not sentences
- use simple and clear but appropriate language

Evaluating some posters





Some Tips: layout

- Title should be across the whole width of the poster
- organise text/graphics in “eye-sized” chunks
- columns and text boxes

- 2 columns for a “portrait” oriented poster
- 3 columns for a “landscape” oriented poster
- the order of reading should be down columns rather than across rows



Some Tips: fonts

- Use no more than 3 different fonts (usually 2)
- In general use sans serif fonts
- Arial is good for titles and for axis labels
- Century Gothic or Avante Garde are good for text
- Times or Times New Roman don't enlarge well, so don't use
- Serif fonts that are OK for text are Palatino, Bookman or Courier



Some Tips: fonts

- Main text: at least 36 point
 - Sub-headings: 48 point
 - Title: 120-200 point
 - Graphs: 24-26 point
 - Acknowledgements: 24 point
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- Restrict boldface to title or headings
 - Do not underline



Some Tips: colour

- Choose colours wisely
- Don't let use of colour or your background detract from the message
- Do not combine either primary colours or complementary colours
 - primary = red, green, blue
 - complementary = cyan, magenta, yellow, black (except yellow on black)
- Choose light rather than dark colours



Some Tips: text boxes

- if you put text in a coloured box, make sure there is a text-free border of colour around the text to increase readability
- default margins inside textboxes are not wide enough in Powerpoint
- increase internal margin through format, textbox, internal margin menu

Scientific posters



- need to effectively communicate the research
- may require more text than other types of posters
- but omit much of the detail that would go into a paper (use handouts to elaborate)

Scientific posters: content



- Title - enticing but short (question?)
- Background – justification for study
- Objectives – purpose of study
- Methods
- Results – usually use figures rather than tables; if used, tables should be simple
- Conclusions
- Scanning from top left to bottom right

Software issues



- Powerpoint commonly used but not necessarily the best package
- sometimes has memory problems and omits bits (copy into Corel Draw and save as Tif)
- print out poster as a pdf file before final printing to check layout and see if everything is there



Most importantly

- give yourself enough time to experiment with different layouts
- give yourself enough time to get feedback from a variety of other people
- use the poster checklist to help you modify drafts of your poster



Most importantly

- proofread a printed copy before the final print
- pin up an A3 sized copy and walk past it
- eliminate unnecessary detail
- check spelling and grammar AGAIN before printing

References and additional resources



- 1. Advice on designing scientific posters and link to a poster template in Powerpoint. This template will prompt you if the amount of white space in the poster decreases below 35%.
- <http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurrrin1/posteradvice.htm> Accessed 26th October 2007.
- 2. Effective Poster Presentations on-line tutorial
- <http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/effective.html>
- 3. How to Prepare a Poster
- <http://www.siam.org/meetings/guidelines/poster.php>
- 4. Online journal for Scientific and Medical Posters
- <http://eposters.net>
- You can view a large number of posters at this site, and submit your own posters to it. You may also use this site to obtain feedback on your poster.
- 6. <http://phdposters.com/gallery.php> displays a number of PhD posters and includes some evaluative commentary