Preparation a Scientific Poster

The presentation of the science is generally in the same format as other forms of scientific writing (i.e. Introduction, methods, results/analysis, discussion, conclusions). However the focus is on the results: The introduction, discussion and conclusion should be brief and concise. Often the results and discussion are combined.

Tell a story but minimize the narrative. If you try to keep your word count to less than 800 words, your audience is more likely to read it. Each text block should be <= 50 words. Remember you can have serious competition for a reader’s time and attention.

A poster should:

- Have a Clear Purpose
- Be Readily Understood
- Have a Simple Format
- Be Unified
- Concentrate on the Graphics not the Words

Poster session at Society for Neuroscience Conference (image from [www.sfn.org](http://www.sfn.org))
Choosing the Software

QuarkXPress [www.quark.com/](http://www.quark.com/)

are all good programs for designing large format posters, but there are many others. It is also possible to use PowerPoint, and many templates exist that can assist in designing posters for PowerPoint, e.g. [www.posterpresentations.com/html/free_poster_templates.html](http://www.posterpresentations.com/html/free_poster_templates.html) [www.genigraphics.com/templates/default.asp](http://www.genigraphics.com/templates/default.asp)

Poster Format

If the poster is for a specific conference or meeting it is important to follow the requirements of the conference organizers. Design your poster according to the space allocated, but you do not necessarily need to use all space. For example if you have a portrait poster board, do not try to use the whole space if it will make it difficult for the audience to read from a normal standing position.

Planning and Layout

The flow of your poster should be clear to the reader.

- Introduction should be in top left, conclusions bottom right.
- In general columns are easier to follow than rows.
- You can use numbers or letters to label different sections/blocks in your poster.
- Use headings to convey major points.
- Most important messages should appear at the top of the poster (details and supplementary points lower).
- Details detract from the main point and should be avoided.
- Balance the use of graphics and text (horizontal, vertical or diagonal symmetry in placement of figures and text).

Font size

Titles: At least 72 point; Headings: At least 48 point; Text: At least 24 point

Headings

- Summarises the point outlined in the subsequent text block or graphic.
- The more important the point the larger the font size.
- Make the statements as strong as the research allows.

Figures and Graphics:

- Should be between 150 and 300 dpi (final resolution).
- Each figure should illustrate one or two points at most.
- Use CMYK color instead of RGB to get the truest color reproduction.
- Make sure all graphics are embedded rather than linked.
• Physical area on graph should be proportional to numbers represented
• Use same scaling if two graphs display similar types of data.
• Data should not be displayed out of context.
• Explanatory material and labels should be included on the graph

**Text**
• Use active voice.
• Use phrases rather than full sentences.
• Lists (bullet points, numbered) are useful.
• Avoid jargon and acronyms.
• Use a serif font (Sans-serif is alright for headings).
• Left-justified text is best (fully-justified is difficult to manage in columns).
• Restrict the number of fonts to 2-3 at most.

**Graphic Design Tips**
For readability:
• Use black or dark-coloured text on a white or pastel background.
• Keep a reasonable amount of white-space (>= 35%)
• Stick to a theme of 2-3 colours
  Consider colour differentiation (red/green colour blindness).

**Resources**
Examples of Posters can be found at:
• Engineering and Computer Science, HDR Poster Day [cecs.anu.edu.au/current_students/graduates/posters](cecs.anu.edu.au/current_students/graduates/posters) > Info for student participants
• [phdposters.com/gallery.php](phdposters.com/gallery.php) (these are particularly well-designed).
• [www.flickr.com/groups/368476@N21/pool/](www.flickr.com/groups/368476@N21/pool/)
• [www.eposters.net](www.eposters.net)