



10 tips for designing a successful poster

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Posters offer a great opportunity to provide an overview of a particular project. A well designed poster will grab the viewer's attention and encourage them to read the poster and engage in further discussion. This short guide offers some tips on how to design a successful poster.

- 1. Start early** – this is particularly true if you are creating a traditional printed poster. It is imperative to leave sufficient time for printing and further editing if required.
- 2. Read the rules** – most conferences / meetings will provide presenters with some basic instructions on poster size, format and layout. Read these and stick to them!
- 3. Planning makes perfect** – Think carefully about your audience and identify one key message that you want to convey before commencing work.
- 4. Choose the right software** - PowerPoint® is the most commonly used software for designing scientific posters. Others programmes including Adobe Illustrator® and InDesign® may offer additional benefits. There is no right or wrong choice and we would advise using whatever programme you are most comfortable / familiar with.
- 5. Less is more** – large amounts of typewritten text are not easy to read. Instead use short sentences, restricting lines to 6-8 words in length. Utilise bullet points, numbering and headings to make your poster easier to read.
- 6. If you want people to read it, it must be easy to read** – Text should be of an appropriate size that it can be read from a distance of approximately 10 feet. Minimum recommended text sizes are: 85 pt font for the main title, 36 pt for subheadings, 24 pt for body text, and 18 pt for captions. A sans serif font (e.g. Arial) is easier to read than Times New Roman. Avoid text in capital letters – this slows up the reading process. Ensure colour schemes add to the poster and do not make it difficult to read the text. A critical friend is always useful to review the poster and provide constructive feedback.
- 7. A picture paints a thousand words** – remember that posters are primarily visual. Make your poster attractive. A few contrasting colours can help. Use pictures, diagrams and illustrations as much as possible. Remember that the resolution of pictures may be adversely affected when creating large posters. Keep statistics simple – a graph or chart is much better than tabled material.
- 8. Spend time on your conclusions** – conclusions are often read first and the information in the conclusions can determine whether the viewer then decides to read the entire poster.
- 9. Invest in a poster tube** – there is nothing worse than spending time on designing your poster only for it to get damaged prior to presentation.
- 10. Take credit for your work** – remember to include your contact details on your poster. Also consider including a short link (e.g. TinyURL or QR Code) to a site or article with further information. It may also be useful to bring A4 print outs of your poster to hand out and business cards / similar contact information.