

How to improve your poster

Why a poster is important

Poster sessions have become a popular way for scientists to present their work. They enable sampling many studies in relatively short time – **average viewer spends 2-5 minutes by the poster**. This is exactly your time to convey your message. Thus your posters should look as professional as your research. Display your results clearly and strikingly so as to attract attention and evoke discussion with mates interested in your work.



Aims of the poster

To attract attention

Visual impact is of a high priority! The best way to do it is to make your layout easy to read and follow. Tips below will help you to make your poster transparent and attractive:

- Keep poster size A0 vertical (841mm x 1189mm). You cannot overlap with neighbours thus bigger posters cannot be displayed.
- Use column format to create order amongst text and illustrations. It makes poster easier to read in a crowd.
- Make your poster as self-explanatory as possible.
- Use pictures, diagrams, cartoons, simple figures and illustrations etc. They should be simple and clean. This is condensed chunk of information, which explains much more than words in the limited space of your poster.
- Use less and larger text. Less is more. Smallest text on poster should be at least 18 mm (including figures). Use simple fonts and avoid also writing in capital letters. Use text blocks up to 50 words or preferably less.
- Highlight important points by colour, arrows, shadows etc. Preferably use light colour background and dark letters for contrast (dark background tires eyes). Do not overcrowd your poster; 20-30% of the poster surface should remain empty.

To provide a brief overview

The content of your poster is as important for attracting viewers as visual impact. Think over the following points before designing your perfect poster:

- Decide on **your conclusion first** ('take home message') and build up the poster around that. Use short, direct sentences and do tell your story with punchy conclusion.

- **Target your audience.** Prepare your poster sufficiently simple and keep language appropriate to your audience (avoid jargon)
- Make your **title clear** to the point and prominent. This is first line to be read and to make your viewer impressed.
- Cover the **key points** of your work:
 1. Scientific problem and its significance – *What is the problem and why should we care?*
 2. Addressing the problem – *What's your strategy?*
 3. Experiment – *What did you actually do?*
 4. Results – *What did you actually find?*
 5. Conclusion – *What it all means? Where one may go from here?*
- Do not include all details of your experiment.
- Include acknowledgements and references. Keep it short but visible.
- Edit and evaluate. Edit, edit and edit to reduce text. Have **colleagues' comments** on your draft. Try **60 seconds evaluation** alike the time spent on poster by a typical viewer.

To initiate discussion

Discussion is a very precious feedback on your work. Your poster could prompt viewer to ask either about not clear content (tips for improvements in future) or about further details (knowledge exchange). Prepare yourself for a session:

- What is your work about? – asks the viewer who only skimmed interesting pictures in your poster. Prepare a **short** (max 5 sentences) and **to point presentation** to
- advertise your poster.
- Try to stay close by your poster. Look eager to answer any questions however give some space and time to your viewers and talk only when asked.

These are only concise guidelines, for more information please, ask Prof Google.