

# Creating an Effective Research Poster

presented by:

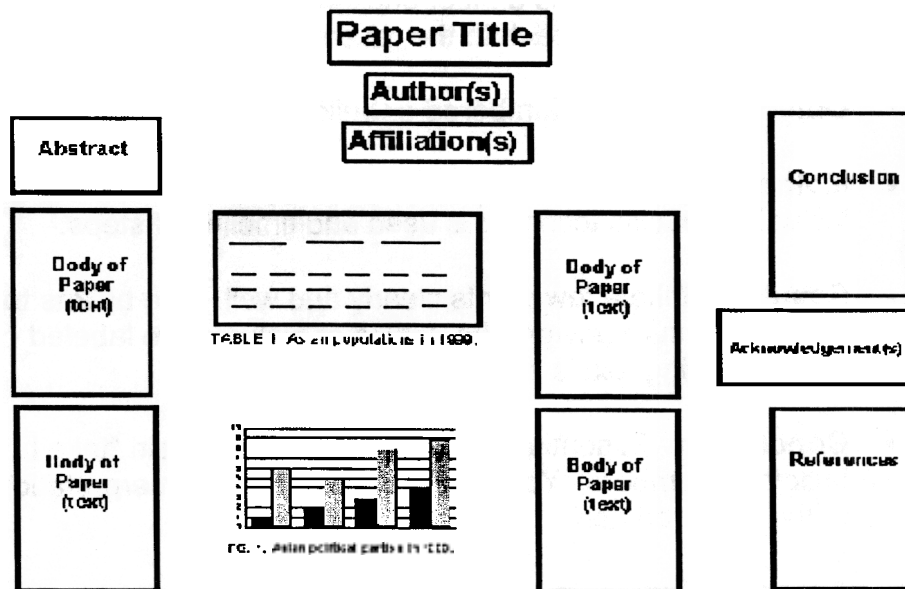
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## I. Organizing and constructing the poster

### A. Before you begin:

- **PLAN AHEAD.** Give yourself enough time to think through the narrative of your research project and prepare your visual presentation in a concise and polished way.
- **CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE.** Use language/graphics that are appropriate for your viewers. A lay audience requires less technical jargon than an audience of peers.
- **GET THE SPECS FOR THE EVENT.** Some questions to ask: Is there a standard or required size for the poster at this particular event? What will the room set up be? Will easels and poster boards be provided? How long will you be expected to attend the poster?
- **DO A MOCK-UP.** Sketch out, to scale, a couple of possibilities for the layout. Make sure you are not being over-ambitious in terms of how much information you can fit.

Example:



**B. Standard Specs/Formats:**

- **Fonts:** Don't use more than 2 font types, and stick with standards like Times-Roman or Arial. Font size guidelines:

<b>Point Size for Poster Text</b>	
<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>104 points</b>
<b>Author(s)/Affiliation(s)</b>	<b>72 points</b>
<b>Regular Text</b>	<b>36 points</b>

**\*\*Remember, words should be easily read at a distance of 4 feet.**

- **Colors:** Use sparingly to emphasize key points, differentiate sections and add interest to graphics. Avoid red, yellow, green or orange text.
- **Sections:** In general, a poster should flow like a paper, with the same basic sections, but you do have some discretion. Each section **MUST** be kept brief—only include information essential to understanding the study. Possible sections include:
- **Title.** Include title of poster, names and affiliations of researchers, occasion, logo.
  - **Abstract or summary.** Approx. 200-300 words, cover major purpose of research, main technique used, 1 or 2 main conclusions, touch briefly on significance.
  - **Introduction.** Include a bit of background, your research question, subjects used, and your basic approach to the research. One or two short paragraphs, max.
  - **Objectives/Aims.** Numbered or bulleted list of specific research intentions.
  - **Method/Narrative.** The process or “story” of how the research was carried out, including specific techniques used and timeline of steps.
  - **Results.** Make a few points clearly and well. Use bullets to guide viewer through text. Make sure any graphs, tables or pictures are labeled clearly and that any accompanying text is in close proximity.
  - **Conclusion.** Essential. Highlight a couple of main “take home” points, using bullets or numbers. You may also refer to new interpretations or future directions of the research here.
  - **Acknowledgements.** Thank those especially helpful to the research: colleagues, grant source, etc.
  - **References.** Only include key references, not every paper related to the work.

### C. Putting it all together

Your format will rely on your resources and on the computer application you use to create your text and figures. You can:

- Piece the poster together from printed out pages from a word processing program or from PowerPoint slides. OR...
- Create one document in a publishing/graphics program such as Photoshop or Illustrator and get it printed out as one large poster. This is an attractive way to do a poster, but requires facility with a more advanced program. It also can cost upward of \$100 to get it printed out poster-sized, especially with color.

#### TIPS:

- Posters generally read top to bottom, rather than left to right.
- Use blank space to good effect—do not “clutter” your poster. In doubt? Edit out.
- Space your information proportionally for a symmetric appearance.
- Use matting spray, poster tape or “restickable” glue to attach slides—not pushpins.
- If possible, put slides on cardstock or poster board—they will be more durable.
- If your poster is in one piece (large-format printed), consider having it laminated.

## II. Services/materials you may need and where to get them:

- **Construction materials:** Poster or foam-core board, colored paper/card stock to frame or trim your slides, re-stickable glue stick, rubber cement, poster tape or velcro tabs.

Get them at: Office Depot, Office Max, Sunset Stationers (653 Irving)

- **Printing** (color, large format):

The Source @ UCSF  
Millberry Union Building West I-Level-- 415/476-5900  
Laurel Heights, Suite 219--415/502-7722 (also will mount poster on foam board)

Kinko's (any location)

### III. Attending your poster effectively

TIPS:

- Have a “2-minute summary” down. Practice beforehand so that you can explain the poster clearly and succinctly in 2 minutes. Anticipate possible questions and know your poster inside and out!
- Have a reasonably professional appearance. It will help you feel and look confident and poised. You may be meeting your next boss!
- Stand or sit with open body language. Introduce yourself to your attendee and make sure you know who they are.
- If the person you are speaking with seems interested, engage them in conversation on your research and how it relates to their own interests. Think “networking”.
- Have copies of your paper or abstract available to hand out, especially if you leave the poster unattended. Include your contacting information!

#### Testing Your Poster Checklist

- Does the verbal and visual information communicate the major points?
- Is the information well organized, clearly expressed and all essential?
- Is the information legible from 4-6 ft. away?
- Can the viewer absorb the contents in 5 minutes?
- Is the poster free of typographical errors?
- Are all charts and graphs clearly labeled?
- Are all materials securely mounted on the board?
- Are you able to synopsise the study in 2 minutes?
- Have you prepared a one-page study summary, with contacting info?

Reference: Bauldoff, G & George, B. (1999). The Art and Science of Posters. Communication How-Tos. Sigma Theta Tau International, Honor Society of Nursing