

How to make an academic poster

The following paper is a useful guide to making academic posters, and much of the information outlined below is drawn from this resource: Gundogan B, Koshy K, Kurar L, Whitehurst K. How to make an academic poster. *Ann Med Surg.* 2016;11:69-71. doi:10.1016/j.amsu.2016.09.001.

Context:

Posters are widely used in the academic community to showcase your work at conferences and meetings. Posters make excellent and visually appealing vehicles to summarize important findings.

A poster usually incorporates a mixture of brief text mixed with tables, graphs, pictures, and schematics to bring interest and clarity to the information. At the conference, one or more of the authors will stand by the poster display while other participants come to view the poster and ask questions.

Making a poster:

- Software: Most often people use Microsoft Powerpoint, however other programs such as Microsoft Publisher and Adobe Illustrator can be used
- Title: Short, clear, interesting (title should be the same as the abstract you submit). Include all authors that were included in your abstract with their affiliations
- Headings: Generally will be the same as headings in the abstract you submitted. For example: Background, Methods, Results, Limitations, Conclusions, Future Research
- Text: Keep text to a minimum, and ensure it is clear and to the point. Bullet points and numbering can help to keep text clear. Text should be readable from 5 feet away.
- Graphics: Use pictures, graphs, tables to highlight your information when possible
- Institutional consistency: If you work at a clinic, hospital, university, etc, ask if they have an institutional template for posters. If they/you don't, you may want to consider creating one. This makes it easier for you and your colleagues moving forward, but also keeps your clinic/institution branding consistent. Consider including the research intuitions logo, a consistent colour scheme for background, graphics, headings and text, and consistent fonts.
- General considerations:
 - Use consistent font types, sizes, and colours in your poster
 - Having white space is a good thing!

- Watch your alignment and symmetry. Programs like Powerpoint have grid lines you can place on your poster to help you ensure your tables and text are well aligned and symmetrical. Zoom in on your poster periodically to help you see small layout issues you may not notice when zoomed out.

Printing your poster:

- Check the conference/meeting size requirements! Most conference will tell you a maximum dimension; common dimensions are between 3ft x 3ft and 4 ft x 4 ft, or a combo.
- Send your poster to a print shop. Call ahead to ask how long it will take, cost, and how they'd like you to send it to them. Some shops want PDF versions emailed, others may ask for it on USB.
- There are different poster materials used (some are glossy, some mat, some thick, some thin). There is no rule on this, consider durability (will you be presenting it at other conferences as well?), visual appeal, and cost.

Transporting your poster:

- Cardboard or plastic poster tubes are available and a good investment. These are often found at stationary/office stores such as Staples, Office Max, and Walmart.
- Poster tubes can usually be brought on a plane, or you can check it with luggage if travelling for a conference.

Presenting your poster:

- Have someone from your research team stand next to the poster during the poster session of the conference or meeting
- People will walk around, and if you see someone looking at your poster, offer to walk them through the poster or tell them about your research
- Practice a short “elevator speech” about your work. Not everyone will want a full 10 minute description of your research, have a 30 second snapshot ready