Creating an Academic Poster

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Objectives

- Describe the steps for formatting and designing an academic poster.
- Discuss the creation of appropriate poster content.

Academic Posters…

- sell your work in ten seconds.
- should be eye catching.
- are a simple, yet effective way to display research data.
- contain a mixture of brief text mixed with visual data representations.

Poster Presentation

- At a conference, a member of the research team stands by the poster display while conference attendees can come and view the poster.
- If you succeed in capturing someone’s attention, you have about 30 seconds to convey an overall understanding of the project.
- If they are interested, they will spend additional time exploring the information and asking questions.
- A poster provides an opportunity for making valuable contacts and engaging in meaningful dialogue with colleagues.
- A poster can convey your message to a large audience. However, if your poster does not grab people's attention, your efforts have been in vain.

So how can I visually share my research?

> *"It takes intelligence, even brilliance, to condense and focus information into a clear, simple presentation that will be read and remembered. Ignorance and arrogance are shown in a crowded, complicated, hard-to-read poster."*
>
> **Mary Helen Briscoe**

Poster Development Steps

- Conceptualize
  - Audience
  - Guidelines
  - Material
- Development
  - Sizing
  - Outline of content
  - Design
  - Layout
  - Flow
- Review
  - Outside perspective
  - Collaborator feedback
- Print

Where to begin

- Review conference poster guidelines
  - Check for sizing information
- **Correctly size poster before adding content**
- Use conference abstract submission to begin condensing your work into concise, easily understandable points
- Think about creating a **storyboard**
  - Create a rough visualization of your poster
  - Should contain no content or data
  - Enables you to visualize the dimensions of poster and provides a rough outline of the approximate proportions of space that will be devoted to each section

Choose Software

- Powerpoint
- Publisher
- Adobe Illustrator
- Photoshop

*Complete the entire poster on a single platform to avoid formatting issues or lost image files.

Design

- Color
  - Use sparingly
  - Stick to a few colors that compliment each other
- Font
  - Keep it consistent
  - Bigger is better: Information should be readable from 6 – 10 feet away
  - Sans serif
  - Keep word count low
- Create columns for structure
  - Avoid blocks of text longer than 10 sentences
- Background=light colored
  - Make sure there is contrast between background and text
- Use headlines, bullets, numbering to make it easy to read
- Use all space
- Label clearly
- Keep it clean – simple colors, simple background, simple font

A Good Title is Key

- Should briefly convey the most interesting finding or issue of your research
- Sell your work!
  - Needs to be catchy in order to reel in conference attendees
  - Pose a question, define project scope, or hint at major finding
  - Short, sharp, and compelling
- Never use all caps in title
- Eye catching and prominent on page
- Avoid confusing acronyms

Poster Layout

- Many templates can be found online
- Make sure the layout is:
  - Organized
  - Has a clear flow
  - And well defined sections
- Use prominent category headings
- Leave breathing room around text
- Guide eyes from one succinct frame to another in a logical fashion from beginning to end
- Use arrows, numbering, etc. to move from one logical step to another
- Make sure the main points can be read at eye level
- Don’t bury conclusions
- Use lists of sentences rather than blocks of text

Content

- Effectively summarize project information and generate discussion
- Well structured just like academic writing
- Concise distillation of the work
  - Limited space to share your work
- Highlight major findings and most interesting things about research

Content Elements

- Introduction
  - Get your viewer interested in the issue or question
  - 200 words
- Objectives
  - <100 words
- Methods
  - Briefly describe procedure, but not with the detail used for a manuscript
  - Use figures and flow charts to illustrate experimental design
  - Mention statistical analyses
  - 200 words
- Results
  - Briefly describe qualitative and quantitative results
  - Include presentation of data analysis
  - Refer to supporting charts and figures
  - 200 words
- Conclusions
  - Remind reader of the major result and try to convince why the outcome is interesting
  - State the relevance of your findings to other published work, relevance to real world, and/or future directions.
  - 200 words

Visuals

- Keep posters visual – think of it as an illustrated abstract
- Incorporate images, diagrams, graphs and figures when appropriate
- Visuals can be used to create a clear portrayal of complex concepts
- Graphs and figures should be saved as PNGs before being imported
- Make sure to include headings, labels, scales and brief explanations for visuals
- Picture resolution – at least 150 dpi
- Make sure that details on graphs and photographs can be comfortably viewed from 6 feet away
- Use web graphics with caution (low resolution and copyright)
- Don’t clutter your poster with images, logos, etc.

Poster Review

- Ask someone outside the project to review poster
  - Format
  - Flow
  - Content
  - Spelling/grammar
- Get feedback from co-authors
- ELIMINATE all extraneous material

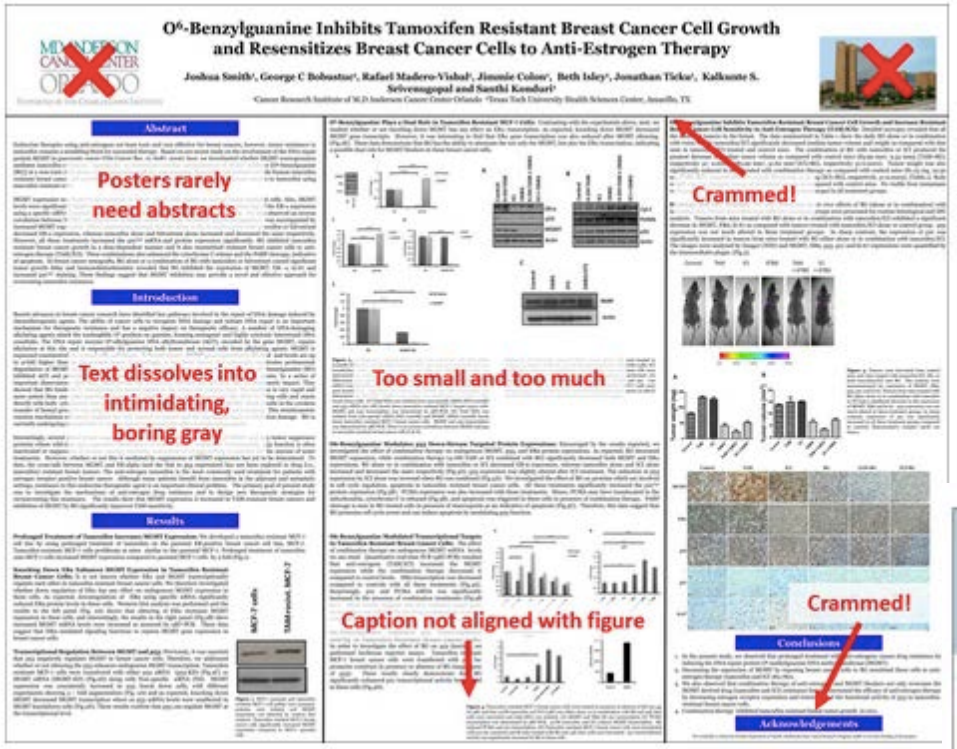
Printing

- Export to PDF before printing
- Confirm size with printer
- Specify matte or gloss paper

Finished Poster Size	Page Size in PPT	Enlargement when printed
36" x 48"	36" x 48"	100%
36" x 56"	36" x 56"	100%
36" x 60"	18" x 30"	200%
36" x 72"	18" x 36"	200%
48" x 56"	48" x 56"	100%
48" x 60"	24" x 30"	200%
48" x 72"	24" x 36"	200%
48" x 84"	24" x 42"	200%
48" x 96"	24" x 48"	200%

Other components to remember

- Acknowledgments
- Citations
- Provide further information
  - QR code
  - Provide URL to electronic copy of poster
  - Printed handout
- Contact information


O⁶-Benzylguanine Inhibits Tamoxifen Resistant Breast Cancer Cell Growth and Resensitizes Breast Cancer Cells to Anti-Estrogen Therapy
Posters rarely need abstracts
Text dissolves into intimidating, boring gray
Too small and too much
Crammed!
Caption not aligned with figure
Crammed!

Tips for Designing Effective Presentations
A poster with the main title in 1½" sans serif
Get the audience's attention and communicate your message quickly and succinctly.
Viewers reading this line demonstrate the poster's success!

Remember!

- Catch the readers attention
  - Reel them in with eye-catching and descriptive title
- Make your poster visually pleasing
  - Large, easy to read font
  - Prominent section headings
  - Clear and effective visuals
- Poster layout and format are critical
  - Create a logical organizational flow of information
- Content is key, but keep it concise
  - The number one mistake is to make your poster too long!
- Add a little personality!

References

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