

HOW TO MAKE AN ACADEMIC POSTER

An Opinionated Tutorial

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WHY THIS WORKSHOP

Potentially lots of firsts—scary!

- The first time you've done a study from start to finish.
- The first time you've created an academic poster.
- The first time you've been to a conference.

This workshop

- I had no idea what I was doing too.
- I want this to be the workshop I wish I had had my first time through.

My experience

- I've been to lots of conferences.
- I've presented four posters.

THREE ASPECTS TO A POSTER PRESENTATION

The Research

- Intro
- (Data)
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion

The Poster

- Layout
- Visuals
- Color
- Whitespace
- Aesthetics

The Presentation

- Elevator pitches
- Know your audience
- Stand-alone?
- Online distribution

THE RESEARCH

RESEARCH

Above all else, the research should be good!

RESEARCH

Picking a research topic

- Think of a linguistic phenomenon you're interested in.
- If you're not sure, think of a subfield or a language you like.
- If you're stuck, was there a term paper or homework assignment you really enjoyed? That you wish you could explore further if you had the time?

A good research topic

- Ideally it should be innovative, timely, and relevant, building upon the work of others by examining a gap in the literature that should be filled.
- For an undergrad poster session, the stakes are pretty low.

OUTLINE OF YOUR RESEARCH

1. Introduction

- Brief review of literature.
- Show the need for your study.
- Include citations
- Your hypothesis

2. Methods

- Data source
- How you analyzed your data
- Tools (R, Praat, Excel, etc.)
- Statistical tests

3. Results

- The results of your analysis
- Ideally, with visualizations

4. Conclusion

- A discussion about what all this means
- The take-home message: what you want others to remember

This outline the same as an academic paper and an oral presentation!

THE POSTER

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

Size and Orientation

- Most common: 3ft by 4ft
- Sometimes up to 5 feet (but don't)
- Usually horizontal

Software

- Most common: PowerPoint
- If you have computer skills: R, LaTeX
- If you design: InDesign, etc.

The physical poster

- Tate Print & Copy, takes a day or two
- ~\$22 for 3x4 (grad students for free through the grad school!)
- Text and visuals usually turn out fine.
- Other materials available (\$\$\$)
- You'll probably need a poster tube (an annoying carry-on item)
- They like staying rolled up.

VISUALLY PLEASING

Color See colorbrewer2.org or personal.sron.nl/~pault/ for good color schemes

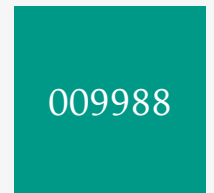
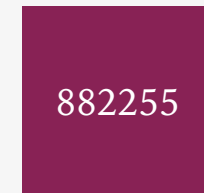
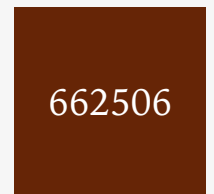
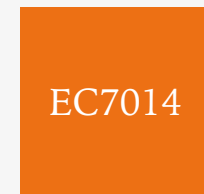
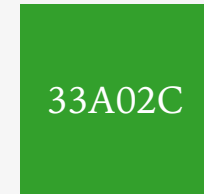
- Background color should be muted. I use a very light gray.
- Choose 1 or 2 colors. Perhaps based on your school's colors.

Consistency

- Avoid sloppiness; consistent font sizes, margins, colors, etc.
- Make the effort to align things (to the 100th of an inch!)
- All parts of the poster should be crisp and balanced.

Font

- Choose a sensible (perhaps different) font. Palatino is safe.
- Complementary fonts for header and body look nice.



LAYOUT

Layout

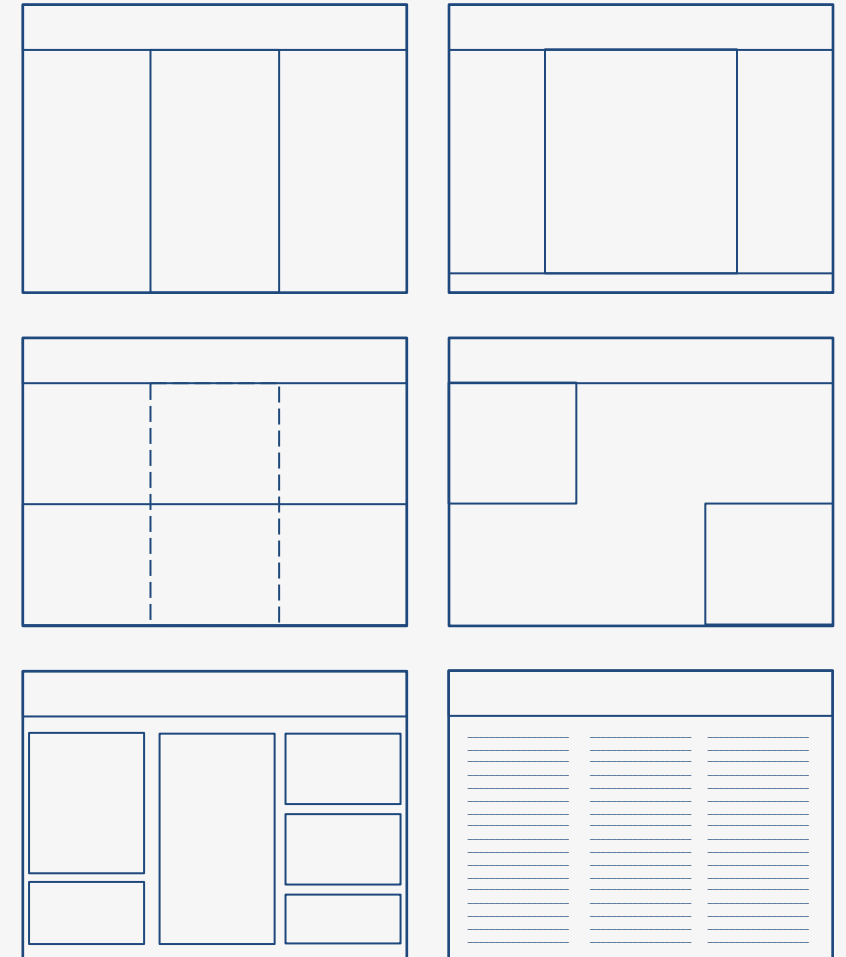
- Usually a 3-column layout, broadly interpreted.
- Usually top-to-bottom, left-to-right.
- Lines, implied lines, margins etc.

Other components

- Title, author, university at the top.
- References, acknowledgements at the bottom.
- Don't be afraid of whitespace.

What goes in the largest section?

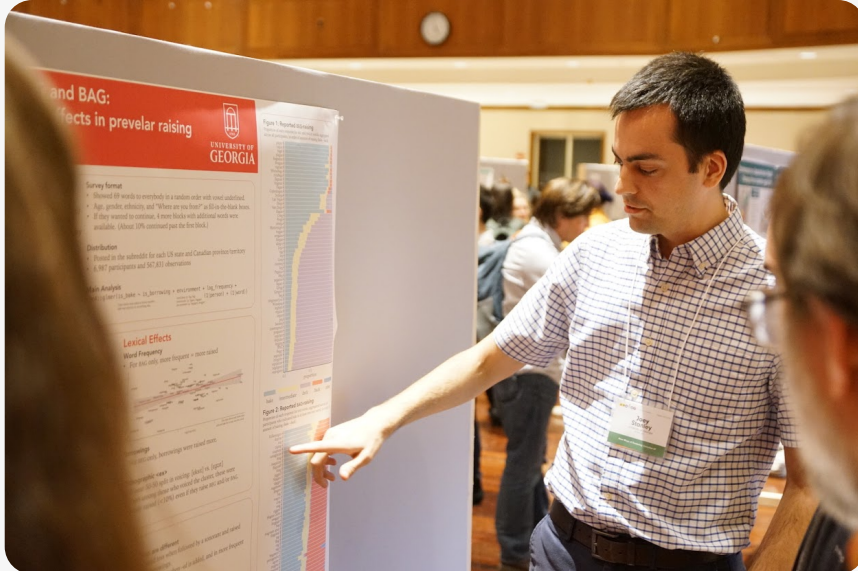
- Generally, the results section.
- A recent suggestion: have the conclusion in huge text.



AVOID TEXT; USE IMAGES

Be brief

- Use short, complete sentences.
- Arrange in bullet points.
- I try to keep text on one line.
- Word count: mine are 777, 928, 812



Use images

- A picture is worth 1000 words.
- If it can be said in an image, use one.

Guidelines to my Particular Layout

Joey Stanley

Big text and objects

Header

- The section header is in a sans-serif font.
 - Specifically, it's Avenir size 44.
 - It's $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the border on the left, and $\frac{1}{4}$ " on top.
- Subheaders are in Avenir size 30 and black.

Section Layout

- Red boxes are used to outline sections.
 - Mine are 15 inches wide with variable heights.
 - I like curved corners: these have a $\frac{1}{2}$ " radius to them.
- Everything is consistent to the $\frac{1}{100}$ th inch.
 - Vertical margins are $\frac{3}{4}$ " and horizontal ones are $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Title and Footer

- Title is in size 72 sans serif, bold, white font.
 - Author is size 66 sans serif, white font (not bold.)
 - There is usually space on the right for a UGA logo.
 - The whole top stripe is 3 inches tall.
- Footer is 1.5 inches tall.
 - I put acknowledgements, the name of the conference, and a link to where you can download the poster.

Smaller text and objects

Body Text

- This is Iowan Old Style font, size 30.
 - I try to fit these sentences on just one line, if possible.
 - When I cite something, it's $\frac{2}{3}$ the size. (size 20 font)
 - Try to put punctuation at the end of each sentence.
- These bullets are left-aligned with the header.
 - Sub-bullets are indented half an inch.
 - I avoid third-level indents.

Layout within sections

- There is some flexibility in the spacing.
 - There is a $\frac{1}{2}$ " margin on all sides from the red outline.
 - Temporary rectangles prevent spilling into the margins.
 - The bottom is variable: use vertical spacing carefully to avoid large white gaps.

References

- It's good to include them: someone you cite might see!
- Mine are size 18 font.

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THE PRESENTATION

WHAT IS A POSTER SESSION LIKE?

Venue

- Big room.
- Lots of posters.

Schedule

- No other events.
- People wander.

Atmosphere

- Loud, crowded.
- Great networking!



PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH

Explain your research briefly

- 2-sentence summaries
- 30 second summaries
- 2-minute summaries
- Unless you have an engaged audience, DO NOT TALK FOR 10 MINUTES!

Cater to your audience

- People wander in and out, so be prepared to repeat yourself a lot.
- With experience, you'll know people's interests and can cater it to them.

TWO COMPETING AUDIENCES

Live audience (At the conference itself)

- Don't expect people to read anything: they'll only look at pictures.
 - What you say is far more important.
 - You could have a poster of just visuals and people would be fine.

Online audience

- You may want to put your poster online (personal website, academia.edu, github, etc.)
 - If you don't have one or don't care, then don't worry about this.
- They will actually read the text in detail.
 - More text is better!
 - The poster should self-explanatory enough for people to understand it.

SUMMARY

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