Preparing a Poster

A poster is a visual display of a topic, project or investigation. A good poster combines text and graphics to communicate a clear message to the reader. A great poster is readable, legible , well organised, succinct, and can stand alone.

Principles to Consider

Attention

First impressions will come from the layout/design, colour of texts and graphics and the informative headings.

Brevity

It is very difficult to read while standing and our attention can waver after 5 minutes, so keep text to a minimum. We recommend between 250-400 words. Present short sections of text by creating short paragraphs and bullet points.

Coherence

The poster should make a logical unified statement. The visuals and text must complement each other. Visuals are not decoration, they provide content.

Direction

Do not have too many sections or too many images. Concise and clear headings are important. Organise poster elements from top to bottom and left to right as this reflects how most people read.

Evidence

The main points and claims made must be supported by valid evidence.

Tips for Making a Poster

- Allow at least a week (5 full days!) to prepare the poster.
- Do a number of sketches on spare paper to plan the overall layout. Prepare draft visuals and text.
- Print draft visuals and text and arrange as planned. Look for the gaps or weaknesses in the content and the claims. Check that visuals and text are readable from 1.5m.
- Aim to balance the amount of content across each section of the poster.
- Experiment with text and border colours. Check the colours don't clash with the background paper and that the effect is restful to the eye. Limit your 'pallet' to 2-3 colours.
- Choose the best visual (graph, table, diagram) to present the content you wish to highlight.
- Look at past posters on display in your school and notice what works and what does not.

Essential Elements of a Poster

- Title and subheadings should be short and memorable as these represent a "contents page".

- Author/s and institution are usually included in the top left corner.

- Introduction - usually a short paragraph that gives the problem and the context of the problem. Usually placed in the top left corner or top middle section.

- Body- short descriptions of methods if appropriate, criteria or theory involved and key findings. Columns or framed boxes of text and visuals are presented in the sequence to be read.

- Conclusion – brief statements of what was achieved and /or recommended. Usually towards the bottom left corner.

- References – only include if referred to in the body of the poster. In these cases only small numbers are involved and these are usually placed in the bottom right corner.

Typical Conventions & Formatting

While requirements will vary, some typical specifications for posters include:

Font Style

Roman/Times or Bookman
Must be readable from 1.5 m
Choose one font and alter the size or bold features

Type Size

Main heading   96—180
Section headings   48—84
Text and captions 14—18

Written Style

Formal and direct
Eliminate wordy beginnings to sentences

Presentation

All elements must be aligned, clean and well secured

White space

The visual pause between elements
Do not squash texts and visuals together