# Effective
# *Poster Design*
## A Step by Step Guide

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# Step 1.
## Preparation

### Define Your Audience

Effective communication starts with knowing who your audience is. At poster sessions there is intense competition for audience attention. In their first 3 seconds your audience will determine whether to stay and explore your content or leave. If they stay you have 30 seconds to secure their attention by conveying an overall understanding of your subject matter.

### Distill Your Message

Considering the fact that your audience has only a limited time to view your poster, if there was one thing you could say on the poster, what would it be? Select a statement, photograph or diagram that is sure to attract your audience's attention. This is your 3 second hit. Your focus item should be enlarged so that it will occupy at least 30% of the area of the finished poster. Remember that your audience will not approach you if it is not clear what your topic or theme is from a "safe distance" of 10 feet (3 meters).

### Consider Your Presentation Requirements

Determine the size of the space provided for you at the conference you are attending. Find out if the conference has any regulations regarding minimum font and graphics sizes.

### Decide on Your Printing Method

#### Single Sheet Poster (Plotter Printed)

**Advantages:** Large single page laminated posters are attractive, durable and fashionable. A variety of media is available for plotters so you may print your poster on paper, canvas, plastic and photographic type papers.

**Disadvantages:** Printing at a service bureau can be expensive. Printing generally takes an hour but you may not be the only one printing so it can often take a full working day before your poster is ready for pick-up. Large posters must be carried in tubes which should not be checked in with baggage during air travel.

#### Multi-Sheet Poster
#### (81/2 x 11 inch pages on Bristol Board)

**Advantages:** Single 81/2 x 11 inch sheets can be printed on most office printers, reducing the cost and time required to make your poster. Smaller sheets may be packed in luggage easily.
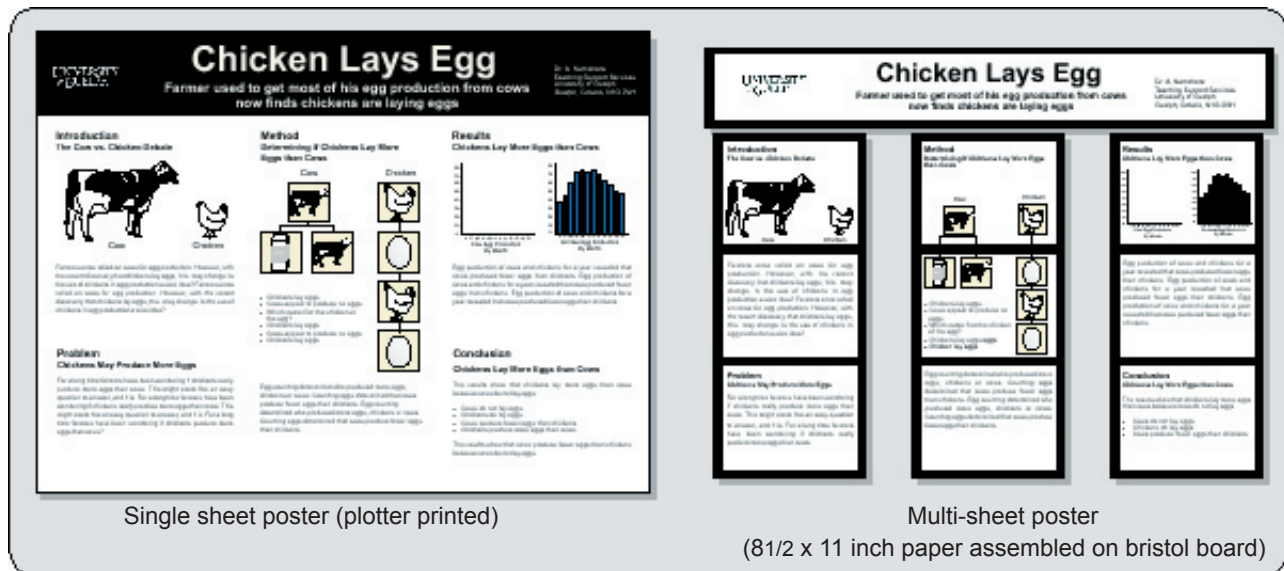
**Disadvantages:** Assembly may be frustrating. Working within letter size paper can constrain where you place items in your poster.

#### Printing Handouts

You may wish to print your entire poster one sheet of letter size paper to use as a handout. Posters can be printed on letter size paper by using the FIT TO PAGE function within the print menu.

#### Lamination

Lamination significantly reduces the speed at which your poster will fade. Posters printed using non-archival inks (these include those found on most plotters and printers) will significantly fade in the first 6 months if displayed in normal room lighting. If your poster is laminated it may be hung for several years before noticeable fading occurs.

Single sheet poster (plotter printed)

Multi-sheet poster
(81/2 x 11 inch paper assembled on bristol board)

## Organize Your Information

Divide your information into main sections, for example:

Title — concise name of poster, contributors, organization

Introduction — statement giving quick overview of poster

Problem — statement of the problem

Method — brief description of the processes and procedures

Results — outcomes, findings, data

Conclusion — summary, discussion of significance of results, a few easily remembered key conclusions

Take each of these sections and summarize its contents into 3 categories:

Heading — title the audience will see first\

Statement — one sentence relating to the heading, the audience will read this definition and should have and understanding of this particular section

Support Material — if the definition has sparked their interest, they will move on to this section which should include documentation and illustrations



Title

Statement

Support materials
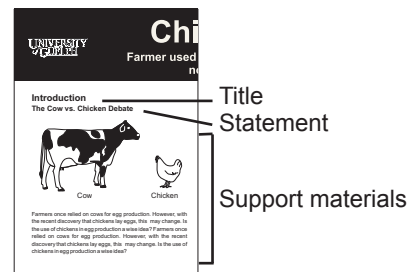
### Edit, Edit, Edit!

- eliminate all but the vital elements
- reduce your information to concise legible statements
- whenever possible, reinterpret text as charts, graphs or illustrations
- use point form for easy reading

### Sketch Out Your Poster

Sketch a rough layout of your final poster indicating the placement of graphics and text. This will help you organize your space and determine if you need additional illustrations or less text.

# Step 2.
## Design for Impact

### Using Backgrounds and Colour Effectively

- Colours and backgrounds should be subtle. Colour should highlight, separate, define and associate information, if it begins to compete with your information for attention then it is too strong.
- Colours may look different on your screen than they will in your print. If you are concerned about colour consistency you can consult a Pantone book (found at most printers) to pick your colour.
- Some of your audience may be colour blind so make sure contrasts are high between bars of graphs, lines on charts and backgrounds and text. The most common form of colour blindness effects red and green.
- If you are having trouble choosing colour try one of these: (pick one from each section)

**Title Bar Colour:** navy blue; forest green; olive green; burgundy; rust; plum (Your colour should be dark enough to use white or cream as your main title text colour.)

**Background Colour:** solid cream or beige; pale version of title bar colour; any of the previous fading to white; white (Background colours should always be light enough to use black for your main text.)

**Highlight boxes and Graph backgrounds:** pale version of title bar colour; white; light cream or beige

Avoid: *dark colours if you are laminating; a rainbow effect by using too many colours; using holiday colours; extensive use of watermarks or busy patterns as backgrounds*

### Leaving Space

- effective posters are spacious and easy to follow
- adequate clear space will direct attention to key elements
- remember the eye looks for edges, so align photographs, headings, text materials and axes in groups of graphs
- A column of text should be between 12 inches (30.5 cm) and 16 inches (40.5 cm) wide. A 36 x 48 inch (91.44 x 121.92 cm) poster with a portrait orientation uses two columns. The same size poster with a landscape orientation requires 3 columns. Leave at least 1 inch (3 cm) between columns.
- leave a minimum of 1.5 inches (4 cm) of clear space around the inside edge of your poster as no plotter prints right to the edge of the paper
- plotter paper comes in rolls, common sizes are 36 inches (91.44 cm) and 52 inches (132.08 cm) wide, find out what size your printer uses and design your poster to fit



Illustrate your points

Full justify your text

Use point form

You don't have to fill up every available space

Replace extensive data with charts

Leave more space between groups and less between items within a group

It is o.k. to let sections be different lengths at the bottom

## Creating LegibleText

- information should flow from left to right and from top to bottom
- columns allow readers who may be unfamiliar with your subject matter and method of research to easily follow the direction of your information
- your main title should be large, 90-150 point bold and readable at a distance of 10 feet (3 meters)
- text and titles written entirely in capitals are harder to read
- body text should be 30-32 point, sans serif fonts are recommended
- 30 point font size will accommodate 250 words per square foot
- for ease of reading nothing beats black text on a light background

  Avoid: *extremely long titles; font sizes bellow 24 point; excessive use of different fonts; ornate fonts which may be difficult to read; single words highlighted within the text*

## Using Graphics for Impact

- aim for 40% graphic content, try to find ways to show visually what was done
- no photo, graphic or chart should be smaller than 5 x 7 inches (13 x 15 cm)
- graphics should be attractive, clear and specific
- crop and enlarge photographs to eliminate unnecessary information and focus attention on significant details
- viewers see what they are told to see in an image, so title or provide captions for your graphics
- when scanning materials for a poster, 300 dpi (dots per inch) is sufficient for 5 x 7 inch photographs, 675 dpi for slides

  Avoid: *images from the world wide web, when printed large they often look soft and have large pixels*

**Title** *100 point or larger*

**sub-titles** *36 bold*

**main text** *32 point*
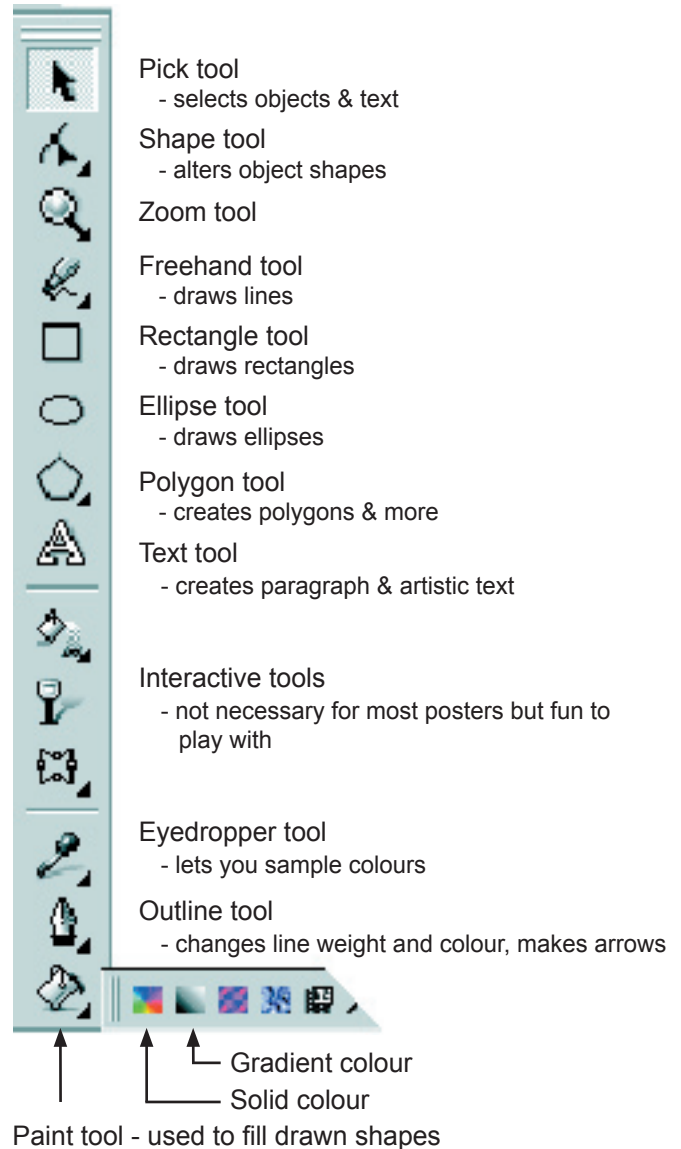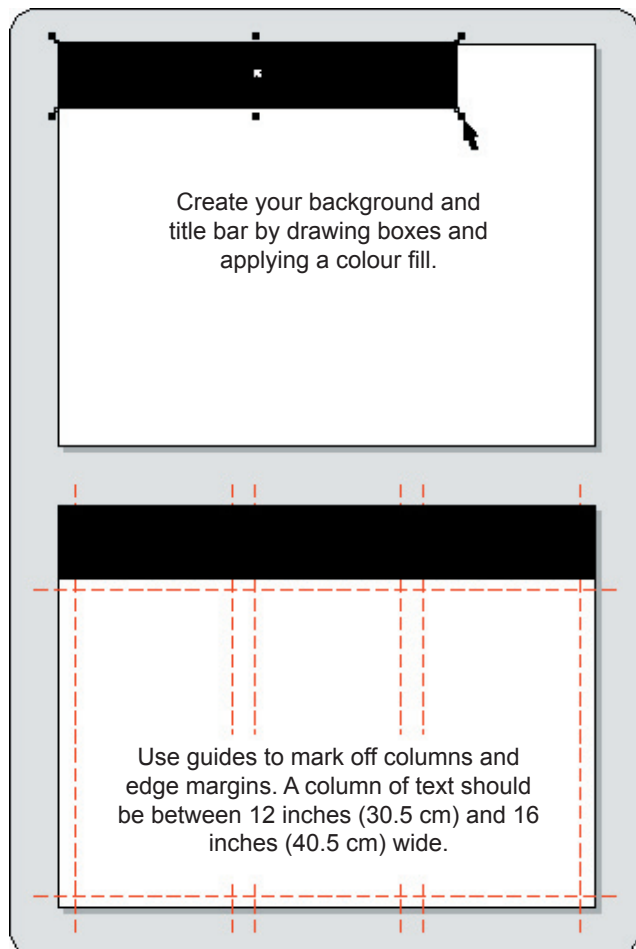
**references** *24 point*

# Step 3.
## Poster Construction

### CorelDRAW Versions 7,8 & 9
### Single Sheet Poster Construction

#### Stage 1: Preparing Your Document

1. Set your page size and orientation by going to LAYOUT > PAGE SET UP > SIZE/ ORIENTATION.

2. Create a coloured background by using the rectangle tool to draw a box the size of your page. Fill this box with your background colour using the paint tool. You may wish to highlight your title with its own background box, to do so draw an additional colour box and locate it directly behind your title, name, and address.

Create your background and title bar by drawing boxes and applying a colour fill.

Use guides to mark off columns and edge margins. A column of text should be between 12 inches (30.5 cm) and 16 inches (40.5 cm) wide.

Pick tool
- selects objects & text

Shape tool
- alters object shapes

Zoom tool

Freehand tool
- draws lines

Rectangle tool
- draws rectangles

Ellipse tool
- draws ellipses

Polygon tool
- creates polygons & more

Text tool
- creates paragraph & artistic text

Interactive tools
- not necessary for most posters but fun to play with

Eyedropper tool
- lets you sample colours

Outline tool
- changes line weight and colour, makes arrows

Gradient colour

Solid colour
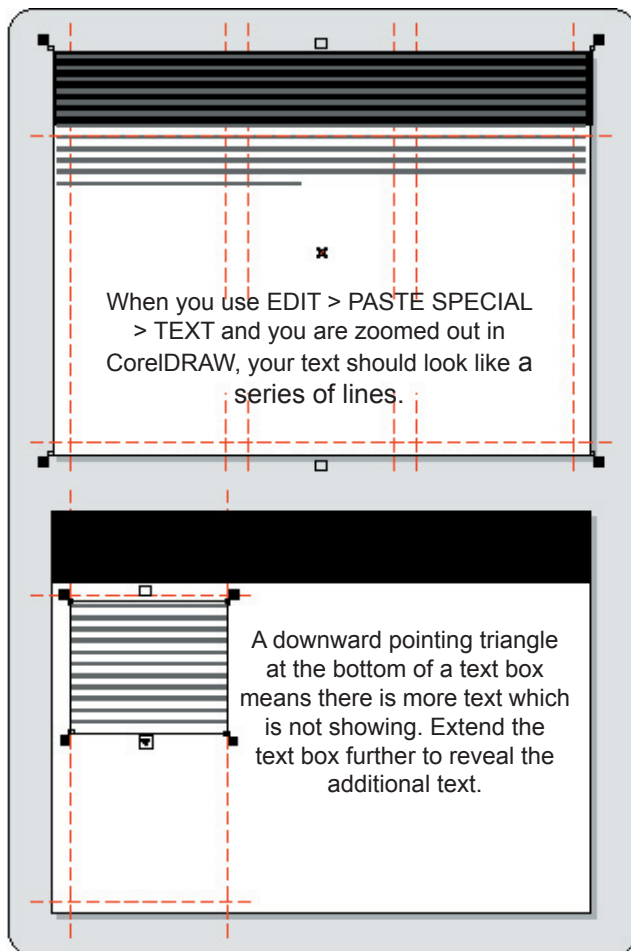
Paint tool - used to fill drawn shapes

3. Turn on rulers and guides by going to VIEW > RULERS and VIEW > GUIDES. Rulers should appear at the top and left hand side of your document. Using the selection tool CLICK AND DRAG guides from the top or side ruler on to your document. Use these guides to mark off a 1 inch (3 cm) margin of unprintable area around the inside of your document. You may wish to have your guides snap to a grid, this can be accomplished by going to VIEW > SNAP TO GUIDELINES.

4. A column of text should be between 12 inches (30.5 cm) and 16 inches (40.5 cm) wide. A 36 x 48 inch (91.44 x 121.92 cm) poster with a portrait orientation uses two columns. The same size poster with a landscape orientation requires 3 columns. Use rulers to measure and guides to mark columns, leaving at least 3 cm (1 inch) between columns.

5. Before you insert your text, set your font and point size by using TEXT > FORMAT TEXT. When you do so a dialogue box will ask you if you want to change ARTISTIC TEXT, and / or PARAGRAPH TEXT, select both. This will change all of the text you copy into your document to your set font and point size.

## Stage 2: Inserting Text and Graphics

When you use EDIT > PASTE SPECIAL > TEXT and you are zoomed out in CorelDRAW, your text should look like a series of lines.

A downward pointing triangle at the bottom of a text box means there is more text which is not showing. Extend the text box further to reveal the additional text.

6. To copy text into CorelDraw, select a section of your text from your word document, and copy it. In your CorelDRAW document select EDIT > PASTE SPECIAL> TEXT. Your text will appear in a large box which will cover the entire page. Use the text box handles to adjust your text to fit into your columns. Using PASTE SPECIAL allows your text to wrap.

7. To place graphics into your document use FILE > IMPORT and select the file of the graphic you wish to insert. To maintain proportions when resizing your graphic, click and drag only the corner handles of the selected image. If there are places in which you can put two tables, graphs or graphics side by side in a single column, it is generally appropriate to do so as it will save space.

8. To place graphs, tables and charts from Excel, PowerPoint or a word processing program, use COPY and PASTE.

## CorelDRAW Tools

**Aligning and Distributing Objects:** Select all of the things which you wish to align. Holding SHIFT while selecting with your mouse allows you to select more than one object. To align go to ARRANGE > ALIGN AND DISTRIBUTE.

**Moving Objects Forward and Backward:** Select the item(s) that you wish to move and go to ARRANGE > ORDER.

**Inserting Bullets:** In CorelDRAW go to TEXT > FORMAT TEXT > EFFECTS > EFFECT TYPE > BULLET, then change FONT to COMMON BULLET.

**Inserting Symbols:** When you copy text into CorelDraw you will loose the symbols, bullets, italics and bold lettering found in your text. To replace the symbols in your text use the symbol font. This requires that you type the appropriate letter in your normal font and

$$m = \mu, a = \alpha, l = \lambda, b = \beta, c = \chi$$

change the font type to symbol. The following is a list of letters that correspond to common symbols:

**Superscript and Subscript:** To change a portion of text to superscript highlight it and go to TEXT > FORMAT TEXT > FONT, followed by POSITION > SUPERSCRIPT / SUBSCRIPT.

## Trouble Spots

### Difficulty Pasting Graphs, Tables and Charts

Although graphs, tables and charts should copy perfectly from your word processing program, Excel or PowerPoint document using straight copy and paste commands, occasionally this doesn't work. If you run into trouble try using each of the paste options in CorelDRAW. If You continue to have problems you can always fall back on printing out a version of your troubled graphic, scanning it and inserting the scanned image. This last option is often the only way to insert anything created in Sigma Plot, a graph creation program.

### Difficulty Selecting an Object

Occasionally an object remains visible while it is located under another object, thus it looks like you should be able to select it but you cannot. A frequent example of this would be an empty bottom section of a text box extending over a graphic. Move the upper object away or send it to the back and try selectingthe object you were having difficulty with again.

## Stage 3. Finishing Touches

10. You may wish to full justify your text using TEXT > FORMAT TEXT> ALIGN.

11. Insure symbols, italics, bold and superscript characters are correct.

12. Check the alignment of your columns, text and graphics.

13. Add the Canadian flag and / or the logo of your institution. The Canadian flag can be obtained via most clip art packages. Logos may be scanned from business cards and letter head. If you are having trouble finding a good quality version of your logo you may wish to contact the company who completes most of your print jobs as they often keep good copies of common logos. Avoid taking logos from the world wide web as they tend to print poorly.

14. If your file has grown very large you may wish to turn your CorelDRAW document into a .pdf file using Adobe Distiller. If you are bringing your CorelDraw file to the printers use FILE > PREPARE FOR SERVICE BUREAU and follow the prompt menus to create a folder containing all of the fonts associated with your document.

15. Make two digital copies of your poster, leave one with a colleague and take the other with you to the conference. If your printed poster is lost or ruined your colleague could courier you another, or you could have one printed at the conference.



Add the Canadian flag or logo of your institution

Check alignment of your columns, text and graphics

Make sure there is at least 3 cm (1 inch) of clear space around the edge of your poster.

Insure symbols, italics, bold and superscript characters are correct.

## CorelDRAW Versions 7,8 & 9
## Multi-Sheet Poster Construction, 8 1/2 x 11 inch Pages on Bristol Board

1. Follow stages 1-12 from single sheet poster creation in CorelDraw *(page 6-8)*.

2. Draw a 8 x 10 inch box (20.32 x 25.4 cm). This box represents your 81/2 x 11 inch printed page. Copy and paste this box to break your poster up into printable areas.

3. Go to FILE > PRINT, select your printer, change your print size to letter size, landscape orientation paper , then use PRINT PREVIEW. While in the print preview screen you should see only a 81/2 x 11 inch portion of your poster. The portion of your poster centered in your print preview screen is what will print. CLICK and DRAG with your mouse on your poster to change what area is centered in the print preview screen. Locate your first box and print it, then move over to the next box and print it, continue until your entire poster has been printed.

4. Cut each sheet along the grid lines of your 8 x 10 inch boxes. Lay the individual parts of your poster face down on a table top in the correct order. Run masking tape along the seams. You may wish to leave an extra bit of tape at the top and bottom of your poster to use as a tag in which to staple or pin your poster to the dispay area. If you are using spay glue to mount your poster to foamboard in order to make it rigid, do not trim the pages before mounting, instead wait and use an exacto knife to cut them after they are mounted.



8 x 10 inch box

Copy and paste 8 x 10 inch boxes to divide your poster into a grid of printable areas.
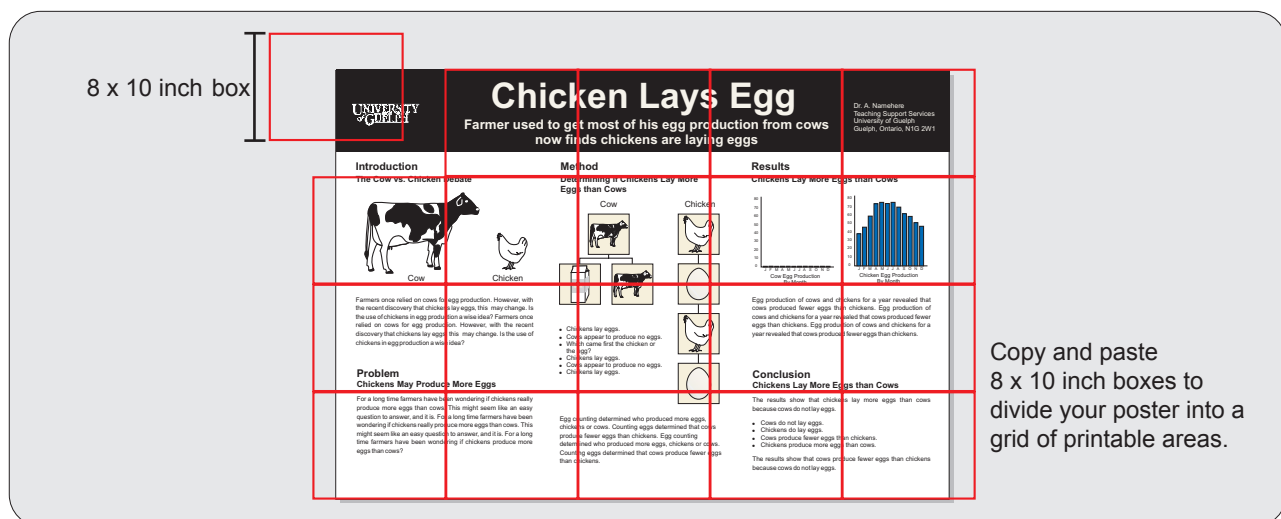
# Step 3.
## Poster Construction

**PowerPoint Versions 97, 98, 2000**
**Single Sheet Poster Construction**

### Stage 1. Preparing Your Document

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1. Set your page size and orientation by going to FILE > PAGE SETUP. The largest size available in Power-Point is 56 x 56 inches. (142.24 x 142.24 cm)

2. Create a coloured background by going to FORMAT > BACKGROUND. You may wish to highlight your title with a distinct coloured background, to do so draw a box in which to put your title, authors names, and addresses. Create a box with the box drawing tool. To colour boxes select the box which you wish to colour and use the colour fill shapes tool.

3. Turn on rulers and guides by going to VIEW > RULERS > GUIDES. Rulers should appear at the top and left hand side of your document. Horizontal and vertical guides should appear in the center of your screen. To create additional guidelines hold down CTRL, click on an existing guideline and drag a new one from it. Use guidelines to mark off a 3 cm (1 inch) margin of unprintable area around the inside of your document.

4. A column of text should be between 12 inches (30.5 cm) and 16 inches (40.5 cm) wide. A 36 x 48 inch (91.44 x 121.92 cm) poster with a portrait orientation uses two columns. The same size poster with a landscape orientation requires 3 columns. Use rulers to measure columns and guides to mark columns, leaving at least 1 inch (3 cm) between columns.
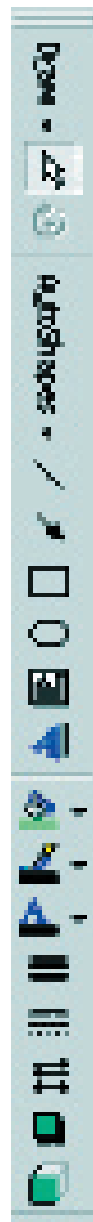
Draw menu - additional drawing tools

Pick Tool

Rotate

Autoshapes - pre-formed useful shapes

Line drawing tool

Arrow drawing tool

Rectangle drawing tool

Oval drawing tool

Text tool - creates paragraph and artistic text

Word art tool - creates decorative text

Colour fill shapes tool

Colour fill lines tool
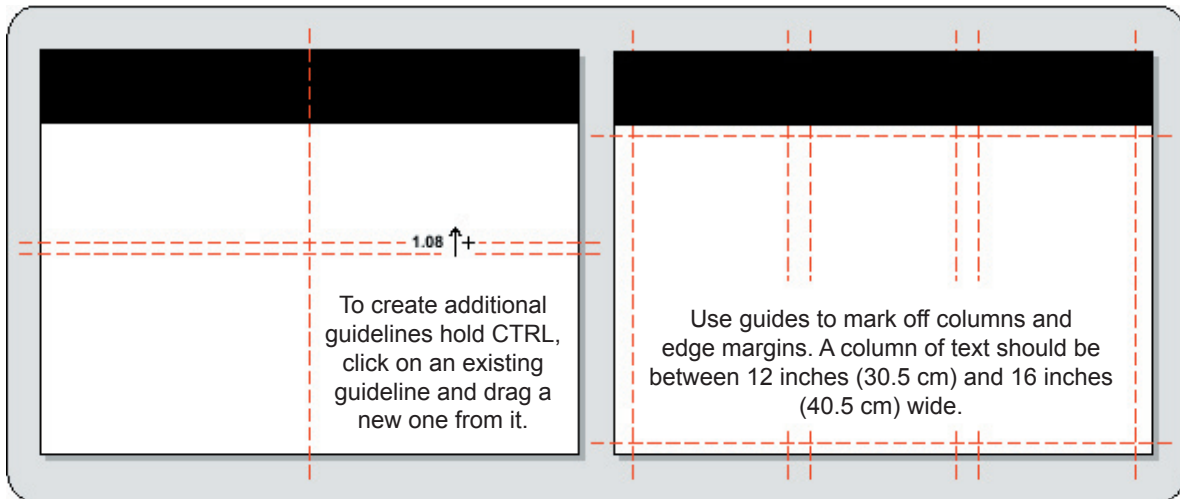
Colour fill text tool

Line weight tool

Line style tool

Arrow style tool

Create shadow tool

Create 3D effects tool

To create additional guidelines hold CTRL, click on an existing guideline and drag a new one from it.

1.08 ↑+

Use guides to mark off columns and edge margins. A column of text should be between 12 inches (30.5 cm) and 16 inches (40.5 cm) wide.

## Stage 2. Inserting text and Graphics

5. To copy text into your document from a word processing program, select a section of our text in your word document and copy it. In your PowerPoint document select EDIT > PASTE SPECIAL > FORMATTED TEXT (RTF). Use the text box handles to adjust your text to fit into your columns. If you have done this correctly your text should continue to wrap when you adjust its size.

6. To place graphics into your document use INSERT > PICTURE FROM FILE or copy your graphic and use EDIT > PASTE SPECIAL > PICTURE. To maintain proportions when resizing your graphic, click and drag only the corner handles of the selected image. If there are places in which you can put two tables, graphs or graphics side by side in a single column, it is generally appropriate to do so as it will save space.

7. To place graphs, tables and charts from Excel, or a word processing program, use COPY > PASTE or INSERT > CHART/ OBJECT.

## PowerPoint Tools

### Aligning and Distributing Objects

Select all of the things which you wish to align. Holding SHIFT allows you to select more than one object. To align go to DRAW > ALIGN OR DISTRIBUTE.

### Moving Objects Forward and Backward

Select the item that you wish to move and go to DRAW > ORDER.

### Inserting Bullets

In PowerPoint go to FORMAT > BULLET.

### Creating a Chart

To create a chart go to INSERT > CHART.

### Inserting Symbols

When you copy text into PowerPoint you will loose the symbols, bullets, italics and bold lettering found in your text. To replace the symbols in your text use the symbol font. This requires that you type the appropriate letter in your normal font and change the font to symbol. The following is a list of letters that correspond to common symbols:

### Superscript and subscript

In order to change a portion of text to superscript or

$$m = \mu, a = \alpha, l = \lambda, b = \beta, c = \chi$$

subscript highlight it and go to TEXT > FORMAT TEXT > FONT, followed by POSITION > SUPERSCRIPT / SUBSCRIPT.

## Stage 3. Finishing Touches

9. You may wish to full justify your text using TEXT > FORMAT TEXT> ALIGN.

10. Insure symbols, italics, bold, and superscript characters are correct.

11. Check the alignment of your columns, text and graphics.

12. Add the Canadian Flag and /or the logo of your institution. The Canadian flag can be obtained via most clip art packages. Logos may be scanned from business cards and letter head. Avoid taking logos from the world wide web as they tend to print poorly.

13. If your document contains unusual fonts make sure to bring a copy of those font files with you when you take your poster to the service bureau for printing.

14. Make two digital copies of your poster, leave one with a colleague and take the other with you to the conference. If for some reason your printed poster is lost or ruined your colleague could courier you another, or you could have one printed at the conference.

## PowerPoint 97, 98 & 2000
## Mult-Sheet Poster Constuction
## 8 1/2 x 11 inch Pages on Bristol Board

1. Use your poster layout sketch *(page 2)* to determine how many 81/2 x 11 inch pages you will need and what information will fall on each.

2. In FILE > PAGE SETUP make sure your document is set for 81/2 x 11 inch paper. Use INSERT > NEW SLIDE to add as many pages as you will need and create each information section on a separate page

3. Font size requirements and style recomendations remain the same as those for single sheet posters.

4. After printing your 81/2 x 11 inch sections arrange them on a table and determine the size of the bristol board you will need. Use spray glue to attach the printed sheets to the bristol board.



This 36 x 48 inch poster uses 3 pages across and down. The title bar uses 4 pages.
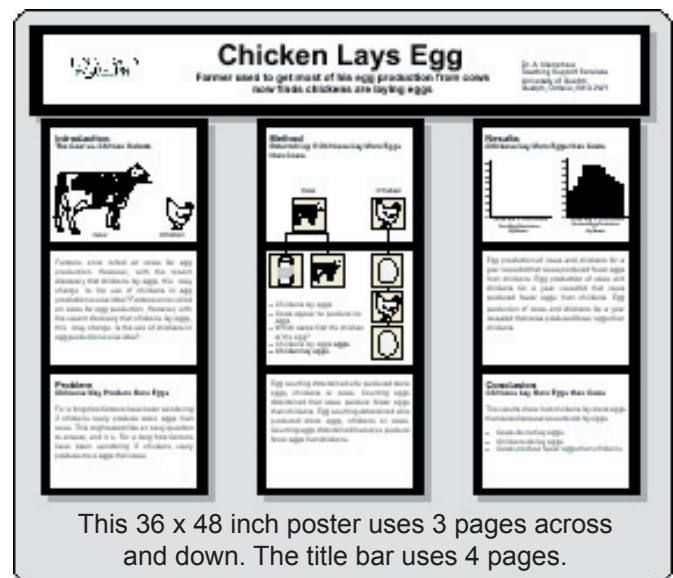
# S t e p  4.
## A s s e s s   Y o u r   P o s t e r

Have someone from your target audience evaluate your poster.

### Attracting Your Target Audience

☐ If you encountered this poster at a poster session would you stop to look at it?

☐ Is the poster directed to the target audience?

☐ Is the title of the poster concise and does it stand out?

☐ Is the posters subject matter quickly discernible?

☐ Is the poster layout visually pleasing?

*If you need help attracting your target audience review "Define Your Audience" and "Distill Your Message" page 1.*

### Delivering the Message

☐ If you stopped to look at this poster, would you read the text on it?

☐ Is the subject matter presented clearly and concisely?

☐ Does the information presented flow logically?

☐ Is the text readable in terms of linguistic difficulty/ scientific language?

☐ Is the text legible in terms of font choice, size, colour and spacing?

☐ Does the title bar include the presenters' names, and the identifier for the school or institution?

*If you need help delivering your message  revuew "Organize Your Information" page 3 and "Creating Legible Text" page 5.*

### Creating Visual Impact

☐ Are the graphics large enough to be seen from a distance of 10 feet (3 meters)?

☐ Are the graphics attractive and relevant?

☐ Have legends or captions been used to guide the viewer?

☐ Does the poster have sufficient clear space?

☐ Are sections clearly defined with adequate space around them?

☐ Have items been aligned?

*If you need help creating visual impact review "Design for Impact" pages 4-5.*

# Where to Print, Laminate &

# Find Helpful Information on the web

**Places to Print Your Poster**

On Campus

**College of Biological Sciences Illustration facility**, ext.  6192, 102 Axelrod Building
**Environmental Biology Graphic Arts Lab**, ext. 3583, 1312 Graham Hall (lamination also available)

Off Campus

**Colt Reproductions**, 763-5100, Unit 11, 126 Malcom St.
**KH&A,** 822-1594, 355 Elmira rd. Unit 121 (lamination also available)
**NC Pestill**, 821-1980, 350 Speedvale (lamination also available)

**Places to get Poster Tubes**

**The Business Depot**, 763-4205, 370 Stone rd. W.
**Wyndham Art Supplies**, 767-1317, 164 Wyndham St. N.
Most office supply stores will carry tubes