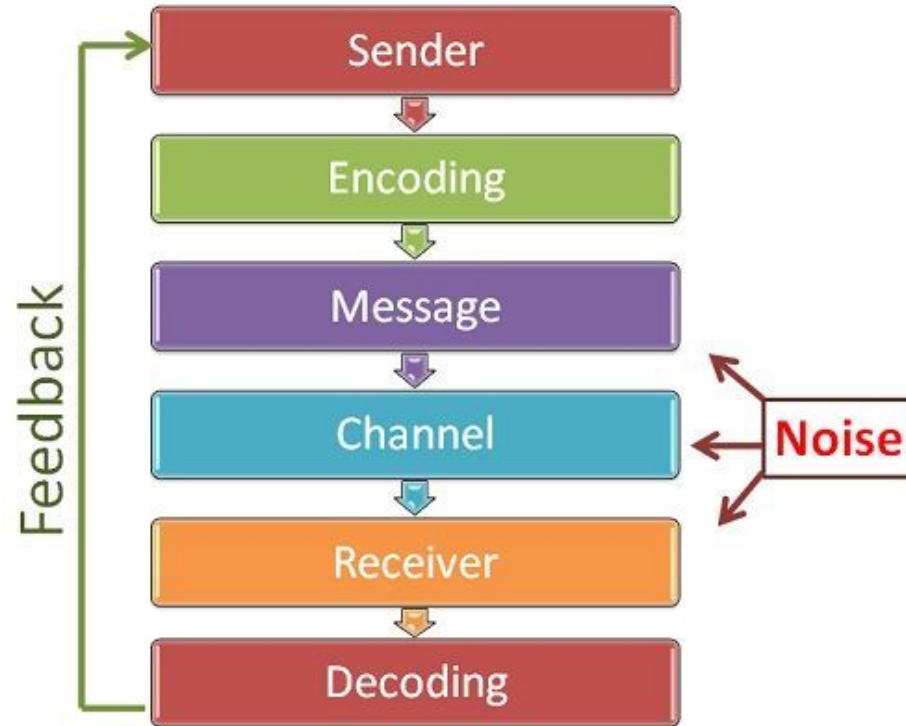


Doumont's 3 rules of effective communication are universal



1. adapt to your audience
2. maximize the signal-to-noise ratio
3. use effective redundancy

Effective Communication Can be Tough to Achieve



Perceived cognitive load stands between your message and your audience



Put logos at the top of your poster to ruin poster aesthetics, reduce legibility of title, and undermine the ability of your graphs to visually compete for viewers' attention

Colin Purrington
666 Teipai Street, Posterville, PA 19801, USA



Introduction

Your reader was mildly intrigued by the title, but you have exactly two sentences to hook them into reading more. So describe exactly what your interesting question is and why it really needed to be addressed. Generate background information will cause them to walk away.

Topology research has shown that text is easier to read if you use a serif font such as Times. But use a sans-serif font like Arial, Helvetica, etc. to add to the text as different. Research has also shown that fully justified text in this paragraph is harder to read, so don't do this, even if it costs cost and professional looking.

Materials and methods

Very people really want to know the precise details of what you've been up to, so be brief. And be visual. Use a photograph, drawing, or free chart if possible, or a photograph, drawing, or free chart if possible, or a photograph, drawing, or free chart if possible.

If you can somehow attach an object, or iPad, etc., that can involve viewers in active way, do so. Refer to the computer website (not better right screen) for more ideas if you are creatively challenged.



Figure 2. Hand-drawn illustrations are preferable to computer-generated ones. Just better or first with an artist to get them to truly get what you are actually doing something right be nice.

Literature cited

Bonick, D.J., E.M. Byrne, and R.M. Brigham. 1996. Lunar condition influences ovulation in Great Horned Owls. *American Midland Naturalist* 138:413-417.

Bonick, D.J. 1995. The evolution of reproduction in Great Horned Owls. In *The Evolution of Sex*, edited by R.E. Michard and R.B. Lewis. Sinauer, Sunderland, MA.

Scott, E.C. 2001. *Evolution vs. Creationism: an Introduction*.

Results

The overall layout in this arena should be visually compelling, with clear cues to have a reader should travel through the components. You might want a large map with most graphs. Or have questions or text and answers with supporting graphs or right. Be sure to separate figures from other figures by generous use of white space. When figures are two columns, viewers get confused about which figures to read first and which legend goes with which figure. Composed content just looks bad, too. The big thing to remember is that a Results section on a poster does not need to look like a Results section on a manuscript, so feel free to be creative.

If you use a lot of small drawings or icons to your figures, do so — those visual cues can be practical aids in orienting viewers. And use colored arrows or callouts to focus attention on important parts of graphs. You can even put text annotations next to arrows to tell readers what you mean about their annotations in the figures. For example, "This outlier was most likely caused by contamination when I entered into data." Also, don't be afraid of using reference numbers to show how one part of a figure relates to another figure.

Figures are presented but tables are sometimes unavoidable, like death. If you must include one, go to great efforts to make it look professional (not the table that you get). Look for a responsible journal and orient the layout, line types, line thickness, text alignment, etc., exactly. A table looks better in a figure composed within Microsoft Word, then inserted as an Object. Use colored text or arrows to draw attention to important parts of the table.

Paragraph format is fine, but so are bullet lists of results.

- 9 out of 12 biostatistical students
- Biostatistical students are
- Control are completed more often, on average, than students without brains

This sample results section is way too wordy, in case you were wondering.

University of California Press, Berkeley.
Society for the Study of Evolution. 2001. Statement on tracking evolution. <http://www.evolutionary-statement.org/>. Accessed 2007 Aug 9.

Do treatments differ in their effects?



Figure 3. Legends can describe the experiment, answer the question, and even include statistics if you're above the level of a manuscript figure legend. But keep brief!

Do A's and B's respond differently to X?



Figure 4. Label elements instead of trying to arrange ways that are difficult or not software. Add pictures of A and B if they are actually things (e.g., icons of aster and bignonia flowers).

Are measures of treatment A and B different?



Figure 5. For the love of God, don't be tempted to reduce box plots to figure legends, icons, etc. Your viewers are probably most interested in reading your figures and legends.

Conclusions

Conclusions should not be mere restatements of your results — that would be boring. You want to guide the reader through what you have concluded from the results, and you need to make the first several sentences understandable on their own and interesting. Because many conference attendees will not read the entire paper, if you don't hook them, they'll walk. These first few sentences should refer back, explicitly, to the heading issue mentioned in the introduction. If you don't mention a heading issue in the introduction, go back and fix that!

A good conclusion will also explain how your conclusions fit into the literature on the topic. (E.g., how exactly does your research add to what is already published on the topic?) It's important to be humble and generous in this section, to assume the authors of previous literature may be at the conference, and further assume they are really and honestly. You can also draw upon the limited types of context such as conversations you have had with some and important people (God, personal connections).

Finally, you want to tell readers who have heard this long what needs to be done next, and who should do it. (E.g., are you taking the next logical step, or should another discipline follow up on your amazing result?) It's OK to put a bit of personality into this ending because viewers expect passion to be personal, and if you're not actually studying that to convert your conclusions, your poster should be doing for you.

If you have a graph that you express the next iteration of your hypothesis, by all means include it. For example, you might make a graph of hypothetical data that shows an expected result in a future experiment. That's something you couldn't do in a traditional manuscript, but it's really fine for a poster.

Further information

Many tips that you've read can be found on "Designing conference posters" (http://www.conferenceposters.com/), an online portal. (Note the URL: it should be composed of generic keywords for searching, not a name, not a person, you can do that by right clicking, then "remove hyperlink.") This file and content copyright Colin Purrington. Free for people to link to and use, but not for plagiarizing, adapting, or being someone (thanks!).