

# Poster Guidelines

Background on the purpose and value of a poster is described on a website constructed by Hess, Tosney, and Liegel (2013). The URL for the website is <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/>. The material in this document has been synthesized from a wide range of sources, and is intended to provide additional information to assist students to create and present their work.

## Developing a poster

**Identify the dimensions of the poster.** If you are displaying your poster at an event, confirm acceptable dimensions with the event planners. If you plan to print the poster then investigate options for printing to determine what dimensions can be printed. Reorganizing a poster is very time-consuming.

Also investigate options for printing the poster since printing services may only offer certain paper sizes and their equipment may only print in certain sizes. Check on cost and requirements such as format for the electronic file or lead time for printing.

**Allow sufficient time for construction.** Allow even more time if the software is new to you.

**Identify the purpose of the poster.** Is the poster intended to describe a concept, provide health information, or communicate results of a study? Content and layout are determined by the nature of the information you are providing. If you are preparing a poster to illustrate research results, you will need to include sections for an abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, conclusion, and possibly references. If the poster is intended to illustrate a concept then a graphic illustrating the concept may be the central element. Health information can be provided in a wide variety of formats.

## Content

A poster should contain enough information that it does not require additional explanation.

Consider your audience and what they already know. Consider the key messages you want the audience to take away. The poster will need to bridge the gap. Beware of trying to include too much content.

Focus the content on the key points. Be clear and concise – less is more.

## Constructing the text.

- Title should be descriptive but brief (e.g. less than 10 words) and engaging – people make decisions about which posters to review very quickly, often based on title alone.
- If you are using an abstract then it needs to be well-written and engaging to encourage further reading.
- Write as if you are speaking to one person.
- Use short sentences, short paragraphs and short words. Complete sentences are not necessary. Use of bullets is an acceptable alternative.
- Use active verbs.
- Use abbreviations sparingly.
- Edit, edit, and edit some more.

## **Tables, figures, graphics, and pictures.**

- Tables and figures can convey a great deal of content in a relatively small space. People often only read the captions so use a descriptive caption for every table, figure, and picture. Refer to the table, figure or picture in the text.
- Graphics are useful in conveying information. Make sure the graphic accurately depicts the concept e.g. a circular graphic for a circular process and a linear graphic for a linear process.
- Photos add interest but must directly support the text. If you did not create the image then make sure you have permission to use the image. Many images found online are copyrighted and, even in the absence of copyright restrictions, you will need to acknowledge the source.

**Include headings and sub-headings** to organize content and guide the reader

## **Organization/Layout**

Top banner includes title, author(s), and institutional affiliation.

Including an institutional logo suggests some degree of sanction by that organization and, on that basis, always check with an institutional official before including their logo. In general, material prepared as part of your coursework would include the logo, but you would not include a logo for an external organization.

Use a maximum of 4 columns. Longer lines are harder to read.

Include acknowledgements if any.

## **Text**

- Choose a readable font such as Times-Roman or Arial.
- Use a limited number of fonts.
- Highlight important content by using larger or bold font, by putting content in a box, or locating it separately. Use highlighting sparingly.
- Use the largest type possible. Content should be readable at 3-5 feet away. The title should be readable even further away.
- Bullet points are easier to read than paragraphs.
- Avoid crowding. White space (background) unifies the elements and supports focus on content.

## **Colour**

- Choose high contrast (e.g. black text on white background) between text and background, and use lighter backgrounds. Low contrast and/or dark background make reading difficult.
- Use a limited number of colours.

## **Layout**

- Organize material so that it is visually balanced.
- Find a balance between repetition and diversity in elements. Some diversity is needed to be interesting but repetition creates a unified look.

- Use consistent elements (e.g. same bullet) and consistent formatting (e.g. font size, indentation).
- Break up large sections of text by using sub-headings.
- Arrange material with a logical flow between elements.

## References

- If you only have a few references then include on the poster. If you have numerous references then consider providing the reference list separately.

## Using Powerpoint to create a poster

Most posters are constructed using a program such as Microsoft Powerpoint. These instructions are based on Microsoft Powerpoint 2010. Other software may have similar or additional features.

The poster is constructed as a single slide, with content contained in a series of text boxes. The boxes can contain text, pictures, tables, figures, or graphics. Boxes can be re-sized, relocated on the page, deleted, or copied. These features are relatively easy to use in Powerpoint but, if you haven't created a poster before, you might want to start with a template and revise as needed.

- Create a slide with the right dimensions and orientation – *Design* menu. Choose *Page setup* and *Custom*.
- Select the slide background – *Design* menu under *Background*. The design can be a solid colour, a texture or a picture. Pictures need to be very high resolution and may make viewing the poster difficult. Pictures may also pose challenges in uploading the file to Moodle.
- Add tables, pictures, shapes, or figures – *Insert* menu
- Add a graphic and enter text in the graphic – *Insert* menu under *Smartart*
- Add text boxes – *Insert* menu. you can also copy boxes, move, and resize as needed.
- Set font size – 80+ for titles, 40+ for headings, and 32+ for text
- Use the ruler, guides, and gridlines to make sure elements are aligned or centered – *View* menu.
- Check for errors or omissions

Print a copy of the poster sized to your printer – set printer options to 'scale to fit paper' before printing.

Decide if the finished product needs to be mounted on a board for display or if it will need to be rolled up for transport to a conference.

Arrange for printing of the final product on poster paper. Universities and many large organizations have the capacity to print posters, but you will need to investigate availability and cost. Posters can also be printed by chain stores such as Staples, or local print shops.

## **Uploading the file to Moodle**

Files larger than 20 MB cannot be uploaded to Moodle. However, you can save the poster as a pdf file and upload that file. If you have problems then please contact the BU help desk.

## **Presenting your poster at a conference**

### **Confirm details.**

- Display space available.
- Poster size limits.
- Availability of a table or chair. If you have a table and plan to offer handouts then make sure materials you want to keep are secured.
- Time frames when you are expected to attend the poster.
- Set-up and take-down times.
- Materials needed to affix poster to the display surface (e.g. push pins or tape) and whether these materials will be provided.
- Whether you need to make copies for people attending.
- Whether posters will be judged.

### **Consider.**

- Whether to bring business cards or handouts. If using handouts, make sure your name and address are on the handout.
- Copyright issues and implications for publication if you plan to provide a handout

Prepare and practice a 1-minute and 3-minute presentation in advance. Select the presentation to use based on apparent interest of the participants.

Allow time for each participant to read the poster.

### **Practical considerations**

- Personal appearance, speech, and demeanor all factor into the effectiveness of the presentation.
- Consider wearing comfortable shoes.
- Bring a beverage so you won't get 'dry mouth'.

## **Poster competition**

Ask about the criteria for evaluation. Criteria are usually related to content, layout, and ability to present / answer questions about the work. Also find out when the judges will be present so you are available when they arrive.

## Reference

Hess, G.R., K. Tosney, & L. Liegel. (2013). Creating effective poster presentations. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters>