

Making an effective scientific poster

A poster is a piece of printed paper usually meant to be attached to a vertical surface and typically containing text and graphic elements to convey a particular message. Thus, posters should be **eye-catching and informative**. Artistic posters may contain only or mainly graphic elements (e.g., painting reproductions, commercial/political propaganda, event publicity). Scientific posters must have explanatory text that is clear enough to achieve its goal and brief enough to keep audience attention. The following tips can help you design an effective poster. Certainly, these can be modified to reflect individual authors' styles.

- **Have a message to convey.** For example, is your priority to present a novel technique or to display your research finding(s)?
- **Consider audience and purpose.** Is your poster for the general public or for an audience versed in the field? In the former case, a plain account (without technical jargon) of the question addressed, is needed; in the later, much can be abbreviated.
- **Less is more.** Choose the most representative or clearest of your results/figures and only those that tell (or add an intriguing twist to) the story you want to tell. Do not fear white space.
- **Clear labels.** Legends should explain well the figure's content in your absence. Sensible labeling of figure elements/details saves lengthy explanations.
- **Get to the point.** Compose the shortest and clearest text, essential to convey your message without losing the audience interest. Do not sacrifice clarity for minutia.
- **Brief methods.** Along the whole poster, but mainly in Methods, brevity is advisable; remember that you will be there to provide details.
- **Unobtrusive background, colors not forbidden.** Many prefer figures and text brightly emphasized by white/clear background (which may seem boring). If colors are used, they should not obscure data or render text unreadable.
- **Palette.** Pay attention to contrast, complementarity, and balance of selected colors. Remember: some people are color blind. Make plots using clearly different symbols.
- **Font size.** ALL text should be readable from ~6 ft of distance.
- **Visual balance.** Divide posters in sections (landscape: columns; portrait: rows), combine figures and text on each section using figures as "anchors" or "nodes".
- **Flow.** Typically, reading should flow from top left to bottom right.
- **Size.** Before starting your poster, be sure of size limits: all must fit within them.
- **Title.** This is the main hook of your poster: make it very **prominent and concise**.