

Guidelines for Creating a Poster*

Online information available at: www.sdccity.edu/support/urc/symposium.asp

Posters are simple to create and they're a great way to communicate information. The hard work comes before you begin the poster – this is the work to complete your class projects and research. Your poster is then just an opportunity to showcase your hard work!

These are general guidelines for creating a poster. There are at least 2 types of posters to consider:

- I. Science and technical presentation posters
- II. Artistic expression posters

The format for each type of poster is different, but the concept is the same – determine what you would like to communicate to your audience, plan your layout carefully, make your poster easy to read and understand, be creative, tell a story and just have fun with it.

General tips before you begin

1. The poster presentations will be mounted on **4 foot wide-by-4 foot** tall display boards.
Important -Plan your poster to fit this space. You can create your “poster display” from many smaller pieces and use push-pins to hold the pieces in-place. Smaller pieces are easy to arrange (and re-arrange if you change your mind), and they're easier to carry around. Note: It is not necessary to use a large poster board to create your poster. Also, push-pins will be provided.
2. Design your poster to allow the viewer to take a 'self-guided tour' through your work. Because you probably will not be present to explain your work when many of the viewers come by to see the posters, your poster should be designed to catch and hold the interest of the reader and communicate information visually rather than verbally. If the viewer has to 'work' too hard to figure out the meaning of your poster, he or she will probably just skip it and move on to the next one.
3. Keep the 'message' of your poster as clear and simple as possible, make the text material very brief, the illustrations simple and easy to read, and the poster as visually appealing as possible.

I. Tips for science and technical poster presentations

1. Layout - Sketch the layout of your poster. See Figure 1 for reference. Arrange the contents in a series of 3, 4 or 5 columns to make it easy to read. Remember that people typically read from left-to-right and top-to-bottom. Place the elements of the poster in position:
 - A. Title across the top
 - B. Abstract in the upper left
 - C. Conclusion at the lower right
 - D. Introduction, methods, results, summary, figures, pictures, tables, schematics, etc. fill the remaining space
 - E. Arrange your elements in a logical sequence
 - F. If possible, vary the size and spacing of the poster sections to add visual interest
 - G. You can use color to unify your poster. Use darker colors as borders for emphasis, but be conservative – overuse of colors is distracting. Using 2 or 3 related background colors can help to unify sections of your poster..

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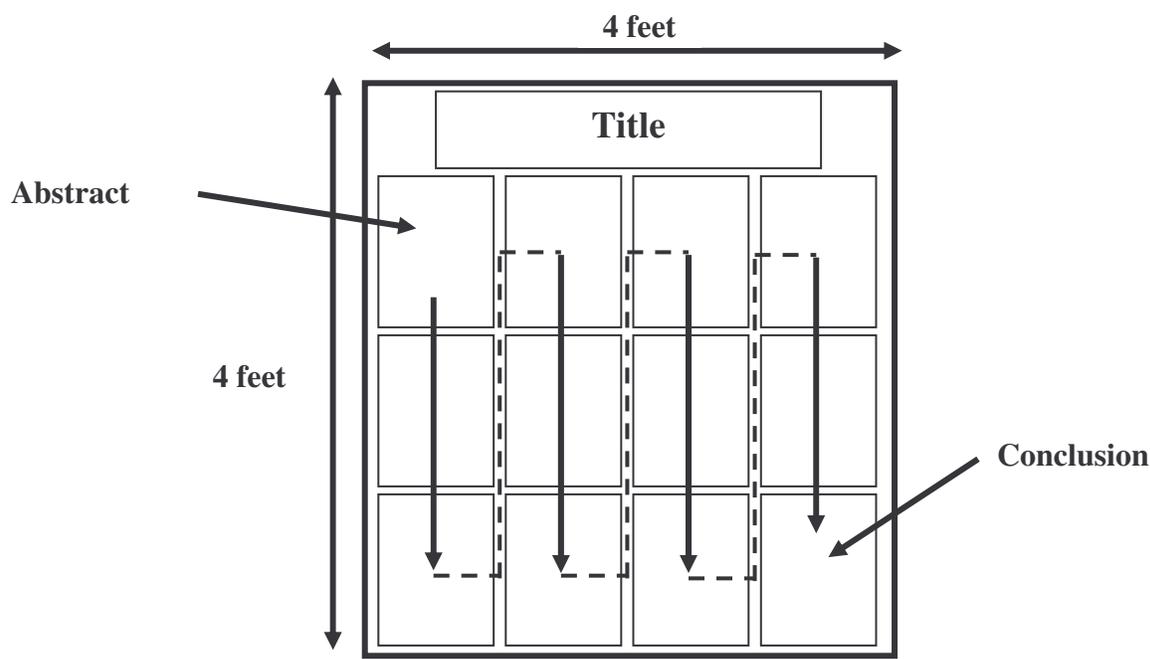


Figure 1. Sample poster layout

2. **Title** – Think big! The title banner should be readable from 15-20 feet away. Prepare a title which includes the name of your project, name(s) of people who conducted the work, faculty sponsor’s name and San Diego City College. Use a larger font size for the name of your project. Note - do not use all uppercase letters for the title banner. It is easier to read the banner when it is NOT done entirely in uppercase letters.
3. **Abstract** – The Abstract is a brief summary of your work. Briefly explain your hypothesis, methods used, results and conclusions. Post a copy of your abstract in a large readable typeface. Maximum 250 words. If an abstract is not available, begin your poster with the Introduction.
4. **Introduction** – The Introduction should be brief (3-5 sentences). If possible, the introduction should put the question(s) you are trying to answer into a broad context of your area of science and provide any necessary background information.
5. **Methods** – The Methods section should state briefly what techniques and instruments you used to accomplish your work.
6. **Data** – The data section will constitute the bulk of your poster material. Charts, drawings and illustrations should be kept as simple and free of clutter as possible and labeled correctly. Use of color can enhance the readability of materials viewed from a distance by using contrasts in brightness and tone between illustrations and backgrounds. Try to avoid using black letters on a dark background
 - A. An effective illustration should have a main point and not just be a collection of data. The main point ideally should be readily understandable by the casual viewer
 - B. Include enough information to explain how the experiment was done, but keep it simple enough to make the data interpretable to someone who may not be an expert in the field

- C. Illustrations should be labeled correctly and readable from a distance of three to four feet, so it is helpful to use lettering that is 1/2 to 1 cm high. Heavier typefaces (e.g. boldface) are easier to see at a distance. Use software like Excel™ to make your graphs and tables.
- D. The limited space available on a poster makes it desirable to use data effectively displayed, rather than extensive prose or pictures. It is not a good idea to mount a complete manuscript that will take the viewer 30 minutes to read
7. **Results** – Provide a brief summary of your results.
 8. **Conclusion** – The Conclusion section should summarize your findings and give the reader a 'takehome' message.
 9. **Acknowledgements** – If you have space, you may want to include a “thank you” section where you thank your advisor, research partner(s) and loved ones for putting up with you.
 10. People base their judgment of your poster on both the content of your presentation and on your poster format and verbal comments. Criteria they apply regarding content include the originality of the work (did you do this yourself, or is it 'canned' material that you really don't understand that well?), experimental design and methods, appropriateness of analytical and statistical analysis procedures used, the soundness of your conclusions (do they follow from the data presented?), and the importance of the research. People also judge your presentation on the clarity and accessibility of the information in the poster, overall organization of the material, quality of the graphics, and your ability to answer questions from the viewer.

II. Tips for artistic impression poster presentations

Unlike science/technical poster presentations, the format for artistic impression posters is less structured – the artistic images tell the story. However, keep in mind the need for poster elements such as a layout, typography, use of color/texture, imagery and conceptual content. Include sufficient commentary to explain any important details, i.e. what is the origin or focus of the images? how were the images created? what process was used? etc.

Reference websites for poster presentation information

1. Photo highlights from past Symposiums: 2005 – 2008 (www.sdcity.edu/support/urc/symposium.asp)
2. www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Poster_Presentations/110.html
3. www.writing.eng.vt.edu/posters.html



Quality – ready to present? Use this list to check your poster for “quality”!

- Size?** Your poster must fit in a 4 ft x 4 ft area
- Clear?** The focus of your project must be clear
- Concise?** Keep it simple. Avoid too much information, too much data and too many words. Use pictures, bullets and colors.
- Errors?** No spelling or grammar errors.
- Appealing?** Your poster must be “inviting”. Think about the readers. Why would they want to read your poster?