

ACADEMIC POSTER PRESENTATIONS

A poster is a visual communication tool. An effective poster will help you engage colleagues in conversation and get your main points across many people at once.

An effective poster is:

- a source of information
- a conversation starter
- a summary of your work
- an advertisement of your work

Tips for effective poster presentations

Get your message across with effective visual displays of data and small blocks of supporting text. Think of your poster as an illustrated abstract.

- Tell readers why your work matters, what you did, what you found, and what you recommend.
- Avoid excessive focus on methods – it's the results and implications that count!

Overall appearance

Your poster should be neat and uncluttered

- Use a pleasing arrangement of graphics, text, colours.
- Use white space to help organise sections.
- Balance the placement of text and figures.

Organisation

- Use headings to help readers find what they're looking for: objective, results, conclusions, etc.
- Minimise text – use graphics.
- Keep text in blocks of no more than 50-75 words – don't create large, monolithic paragraphs of prose.
- A columnar format helps traffic flow in a crowded poster session.

Text size

- All text should be large enough to read from 1–2 metres, including the text in figures.
- Title should be larger, to attract attention from far away.
- Don't fight 'reader gravity', which pulls the eyes from top to bottom (first), and left to right.

Colour

Use colour cautiously. Dark letters on light background are easiest to read.

Stick to a theme of 2–3 colours.

Avoid overly bright colours. They attract attention but wear out readers' eyes.

Contact details

Include full contact information. You want to be found – the reader should not have to look up anything to find you.

Presentation

Prepare a 3–5 minute verbal explanation of your work. Some people will ask you to "walk me through your poster."

When making a presentation, don't read the poster. Instead:

- give the big picture,
- explain why the problem is important, and
- use the graphics on your poster to illustrate and support your findings and recommendations.

Handouts

A summary handout is something else you can refer to when talking to people about your work. Prepare a handout that provides a written record for readers. You want people to remember your work. You can include:

- a miniature version of your poster
- more detailed graphics, tables, and prose
- complete contact information

Illustrations

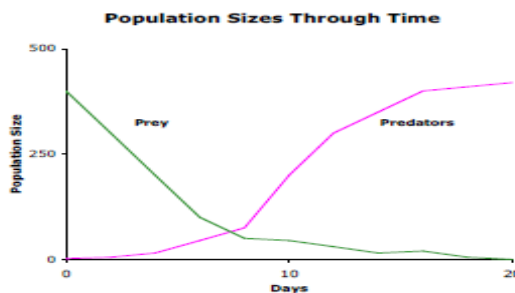
Clean graphs show data clearly!

Focus on relationships – exact values are usually not important.

- Eliminate 'chart junk' to keep focus on data (Tufte 1983).
- Grid lines, detailed ticks on axes, data markers, and grey background are not needed.
- Label data directly, when possible. Legends force reader to look back and forth to decode graph.

Example

Desired message: Prey decreased as predators increased.



Message is now loud and clear!

Resources for Poster Presenters
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