

**University of Connecticut
Writing Center
Poster presentations**

In addition to written papers, researchers often present findings from studies in academic posters at conferences. Posters provide an opportunity to expose a large number of people to your work in a relatively short period of time. An academic poster is not just the text from a paper put onto a large poster. It is a simplified and concise format to present the key point of a study (or two) that can be understood and digested quickly and efficiently.

While the format may be different from a journal-style paper, many of the same ideas apply. It should be logically organized into an introduction, methods section, results, and conclusion. The conclusion of your presentation is the climax. It should tie in with your opening and should leave no doubt about what you want the audience to do with the information you have given them. The poster can be thought of as a visual aid to walk people through the highlights of your study, especially the results.

Posters are often accompanied by an abstract (like the one at the beginning of a research article) that summarizes the research. This abstract should reflect only the parts of the study that are being included in the poster. Since the abstract is usually separate from the poster, it serves to get people interested in finding and viewing your poster and as a summary for those who did not get to see your poster. Therefore both the poster and abstract should be detailed enough to be understood independently.

Sections to include on the poster

The sections of a poster are very similar to the sections in a paper:

1. Title, the author(s), affiliation(s)

This section usually appears along the top edge of the poster. The title should be informative and short, if possible describing the key finding of the study in a few words.

2. A brief introduction describing only the most relevant previous work that relates to the study on the poster

A poster is not the place for an exhaustive list of every study done on the topic; it is assumed that the information presented in the introduction is only a small portion of the body or relevant literature. The introduction should highlight key previous findings or theoretical issues that directly led to the topic of the study. The viewer should be able to read this section in less than two minutes.

3. A brief method sections highlighting key variables or manipulations

The methods section on a poster needs to describe the design of the study, the measures used and the procedure. If possible use a diagram to describe complicated equipment or designs.

4. Results

This is the culmination of your poster, make it count! Typically, this section will have a few graphs, framed by explanatory text. Graphs should be kept as large and as uncluttered as possible. Graphs are easier to read than text. They can also be a jumping-off point for discussion between the author and those reading the poster. Don't make the viewer jump back and forth between sections of your poster to understand your results; present your results along with your hypotheses.

5. A very brief discussion/Conclusion

Much like in a paper the discussion section on a poster should discuss the results of the study in the context of the hypotheses and possible explanations for the pattern of results. Implications for these findings should also be mentioned. This section is often only a short paragraph, but may be longer if the results (especially unexpected ones) need to be explained in the context of possible problems with the study. The viewer should be able to read this section in less than two minutes.

6. References (optional)

Many people omit a references section on a poster to save precious space. If you have a more detailed handout of your poster, you may want to include the references on it.

7. Handout (optional)

At conference there often isn't enough time to see all the posters you want to. To make sure interested parties have the time to thoughtfully consider your study prepare a detailed handout of your study with the details of the research.

Poster Design

Now that the sections are in order the design of the poster must be taken into account. Keep in mind that most people will not read everything on your poster, so you can direct them to the most relevant information using good design. Good information presented poorly detracts from the information. Your goal is not to make the prettiest poster, but to make the clearest poster to convey your study.

1. Use high contrast between the background and text. Dark text on light background is easier to read than **is light text on a dark background**
2. Use bullet points instead of long sentences.
3. Make the font large enough so that it can be read from at least from 4 feet away.

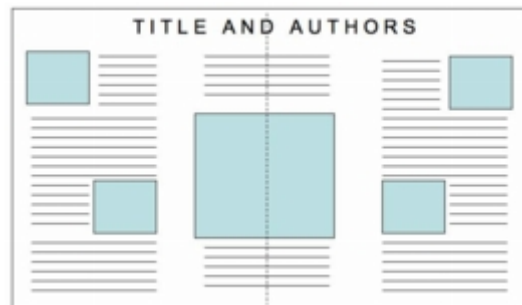
Usually at least **40** point font. Avoid fonts that are hard to read such as *this* or **this** or **this**.

4. Use color to highlight key parts of the poster, **remember that color will draw the eye** to that point.
5. Leave room between sections, if you find yourself trying to pack in as much information as possible it will be very hard for the viewer to read the poster.

6. Don't overwhelm the viewer with excessive amounts of information; you will be standing next to your poster to clarify or add details as needed.
7. A picture is worth a thousand words, especially on a poster; minimize text wherever possible. Before using a graphic image, ask these questions:
 - a. Is it relevant or is it merely "cute" or faddish?
 - b. Does it add information or duplicate verbal material? If it duplicates material, is the redundancy desirable or necessary to reinforce an important idea?
 - c. Is it clear and easy to understand?
8. Posters can be created using Word (with each section on a separate page pasted onto a large poster board) or PowerPoint where the entire poster fits on one slide (see http://academic.regis.edu/cat/files/Posters_In_PowerPoint.pdf for detailed instructions) and printed on a large-format printer. On the UConn campus these printers are in the Library (<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/about/services/ccs/>), and will cost about \$40 to print.

Don't forget that your poster is a vehicle to facilitate discussion of your study. Be sure to greet people who come to look at your poster and ask if they would like a brief walk-through of the study. Be ready to give a 2-minute explanation of your study and answer questions.

Your poster should have a good visual balance of figures and text, separated by white space.



Sample poster layout



References:

- http://academic.regis.edu/cat/files/Posters_In_PowerPoint.pdf
- http://chat.carleton.ca/~ddestefa/Creating_Effective_Posters.htm
- <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/CreatePosterLayout.html>
- <http://www.psichi.org/conventions/tips.asp>