Making Great Posters for Research Applications

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Purpose of a Poster

• To clearly communicate information and ideas
• To describe an area of research, health research center or core, research theme, or opportunity for future health research collaboration with faculty in the College
• To stimulate interest and discussion among Health Scholar Showcase participants
A Great Poster Is…

Readable

• Easy flow of ideas from one item to the next
• Avoid grammatical errors, complex or passive sentence structure, and misspellings which make a poster "hard to read"
A Great Poster Is...

Legible

- If a text is legible, it can be “deciphered”
- Common errors include:
  - Use of fonts that are too small to be read from 4-6 feet away, the typical distance for reading a poster
  - Poor text color selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size:</th>
<th>Arial</th>
<th>Times New Roman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Font</td>
<td>Font</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Font</td>
<td>Font</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Font</td>
<td>Font</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Great Poster Is…

Well Organized

• Spatial organization makes the difference between reaching 95% rather than just 5% of your audience.
• Time spent trying to understand the content or data is time taken away from thinking about the main messages you seek to convey.
A Great Poster Is…

and Succinct

• Studies show that you have only 10 seconds to grab and retain your audience's attention
• Make sure the title is prominent and clear
• Keep the amount of text used throughout your poster to a minimum
• Do not attempt to include too many details in your poster. Stick to the big ideas.
Making a Poster – 2 easy steps!

Designing the Poster Elements

• Most posters are made using some kind of computer software
• We recommend using Microsoft PowerPoint

Printing the Poster

• Several local printers can print your poster. Health Scholar Showcase posters should use a 36 x 48 inch trifold template. Contact us if you have questions.
Give Yourself Enough Time

**Time**

- It takes time to make a great poster
- Allow yourself 2 - 3 days to design and create your poster
- Last bits of data you rush around to get at the last moment will go completely unnoticed if your poster is messy and disorganized
Getting Started
What is the Main Message?

- Keep it short and sweet. Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Your poster should cover the key points of your topic or theme.
- Make your poster as self-explanatory as possible.
- Do not attempt to include too many details!
Capture your Audience

- Minimize use of text. Maximize use of images, graphs, and charts to tell your story.
- Main points must come through clearly with very little effort from the viewer.
- If a detailed explanation is required, prepare a handout for viewers. Include detailed contact information or action steps for viewers to follow up with you.
- What one or two things do you want the person viewing your poster to know or learn from the content? Including too many main ideas creates clutter and confusion.
Getting Started

Arrange your Content Elements

• Before creating the final poster layout, take pieces of paper that are about the size of each element and see if you can actually make everything fit in the three columns of your trifold 36 x 48 poster.
Getting Started

ELIMINATE all Extraneous Material

• The average poster gazer spends less than 15 seconds deciding whether or not to stop and read the content of your poster.
• Present data only if it supports your central message
• When in doubt, edit out – crowded cluttered posters are rarely read and seldom effective. Simple images and graphics are more likely to gain attention.
Getting Started

**Identify Who and What is Represented in the Poster**

- Poster Title
- Names and affiliations of featured faculty and staff,
- Names of poster presenter(s)
- Logos from involved department(s), college(s), external collaborator(s), funding agency, etc.
- Graphics and/or images that easily summarize information, basic description of WHAT you want poster viewers to know
Arranging Poster Elements and Text

- People approach new information in a known spatial sequence: we track vertically from center to top to bottom, and horizontally from left to right.
Poster Layout

Arranging Poster Elements and Text

• Sample posters may be viewed at http://facultycommons.txstate.edu/groups/translational-health-research-initiative/

• Put the most important message in the center top position followed by the top left, and the bottom right corner

• In the center top position should be the title and your name so they will be seen in the first 5 seconds a person looks at the poster
Arranging Poster Elements and Text

• A poster layout in *columns* is most common.
• Arrange the contents into 3 or 4 columns to facilitate the 36 x 48 trifold format.
• Organize the material into sections (e.g., Overview, Activities, Opportunities, Conclusions, etc.)
• Use blank space to highlight or offset information.
Space is Important

- Without space, your reader has no visual pauses to think
- Allow space between sections and around images
- Leave at least a 1/2 inch margin around all edges of your poster, and leave at least 1/2 inch for the gutters in the trifold
Size is Important

- Size of poster elements or the fonts in each element can serve to emphasize the main points.
- Making your subheadings in all capitals and two font sizes larger than the rest of the text on the same panel will draw the reader's eye first, and so be emphasized.
Font Choice

Font

• Choose a basic font whose "e's" and "a's" stay open at all sizes and that is supported by your printer
  - Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, and Tahoma are good choices
• Avoid use of multiple fonts which can be distracting
Font Choice

Size

- Font sizes need to be big to be effective
- You should be able to easily read it from 4-6 feet away
- Test this by viewing a portion of your poster on your computer
  - Zoom in to 100%
  - Step back from your monitor to see if you can still read it
Font Choice

Size

• Recommended **Minimum** Font Sizes
  - Title: 60 point bold
  - Researchers and affiliations: 48 point
  - Section headings: color of your choice, 30 point bold
  - Text: black, 24 point
  - Figure, graph and table captions: black, 20 point
  - References and acknowledgements: black, 20 point
  - Photo/image credit: black, 14 point
Format

- DO NOT use single spacing!
- Indents set text apart and are great for short lists
- Justify text
- Use bullets to illustrate discrete points
Images

• The same or more space on the poster should be taken up by images or graphs than by text
• A good rule of thumb is 25% text, 45% graphics 30% empty space

• Use of color in your graphics will enhance your poster
• Don’t forget to include explanatory captions on your poster. Captions may be written with smaller text sizes

Figure 1. Feline DNA
Images

• Photos and drawings should be of sufficient size to be visible from a distance. Plan for a poster that is 48 inches wide, with 1 inch margins and gutters between columns.
• 4" x 5" photos are a good size
• Graphics are best if at least 8" x 10"
• Place related materials (e.g. photo with accompanying text) close together, then offset it by surrounding it with blank space
Images

- Your images should have a resolution of at least 300dpi (dots per inch) at the size they will be ultimately printed on your poster
- Save them as either JPEG (or JPG), or TIF files
- Avoid using BMP & GIF files
- In PowerPoint go to the **Insert**, then **Picture**, then find your image
- You can adjust both the size and position of your image in PowerPoint
Graphs

- When importing graphs from Excel or Lucidart, copy the graph then go to the **Home** menu, **Paste Special**, as **Picture (Enhanced Metafile)**
- Avoid complex graphs and tables with excessive numbers
- Use colors to distinguish different data groups in graphs
- Avoid using fine patterns
Images, Graphs, and Tables

Tables

• Use tables only if they help convey your main message(s) in a way that is more effective than a graphic.

Table 4: Installed $R_{peak}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOP500 Statistics — Installed $R_{peak}$ [GFlop/s]</th>
<th>USA/Canada</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>18805</td>
<td>6885.8</td>
<td>625.6</td>
<td>277.2</td>
<td>26683</td>
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<td>IBM</td>
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<td>3756.3</td>
<td>258.1</td>
<td>57.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
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<td>787.1</td>
<td>234.4</td>
<td>177.0</td>
<td>3828.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hewlett-Packard</td>
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<td>408.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>2288.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fujitsu</td>
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<td>1370.6</td>
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<tr>
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</table>
Add Color

Color & Contrast

• Proper color contrast will reduce eye strain and make the poster more legible and interesting visually

• Be careful that the color does not outclass the visual impact of your data
  - Too much contrast is hard on the eyes and can distract the reader from your data

• Use color for highlighting and to make your poster more attractive
Add Color

Color & Contrast

• Choose a simple color scheme using no more than four total colors
• Avoid patterns or motifs
• Dark background colors sometimes look nice, but dark backgrounds may increase your poster printing costs
Save your Poster

Saving

• Save the poster as a PowerPoint Presentation or Adobe .pdf only! Texas State provides the Adobe Creative Suite to all faculty and staff, so you should be able to use Adobe to create a pdf of your poster.

• Other save options (.gif, .jpg) will reduce the quality of your poster and should not be used.
Before You Print

Final Check

• Make sure several people look over your poster before you print
  ▪ Research Coordinators
  ▪ Faculty
  ▪ Your Dean

• If your reviewers are confused, it is far better to fix the content now, before it is printed or presented.

• Reduce or eliminate unnecessary content!
Test Print

• Print your poster on regular letter paper to proof read it
• Go to the Print option. In the pop-up window, select the Scale to fit paper box, and set the paper size to letter (8.5x11in.) and landscape mode
• Do NOT change any of the other settings!
• After printing, you can tell that the font sizes are right if you can still read the text. Be sure the two gutters for the trifold are clear.
Presenting the Poster

- Poster presenter(s) should prepare 3-4 talking points to deliver periodically to Health Scholar Showcase participants who view your poster.
- You may decide to have more than one presenter at a time, or assign multiple presenters to work in shifts during the Health Scholar Showcase.
Creating posters for the Health Scholar Showcase provides a new opportunity to discuss shared interests and potential opportunities for future health research and funding.

Thank you for helping create a successful Health Scholar Showcase!

Please feel free to contact us if you need further assistance.
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