How to Make an Effective Research Poster

Key Elements and How to Make them Pop

Pictures

Use high quality images related to your research to grab attention and quickly let passersby know what your poster is about. Carve out space for a **big image**, ideally in top left quadrant.

Title

An effective title should be easily read from many feet away and communicate the main result of the research. Aim for a **positive statement** instead of an "Effects of X on Y" or "What is the effect of X on Y?" title. Write the title to reach all of your audience.

Data Visualizations

Choose the key results and support them with visual representations. Emphasize graphs, maps, and drawings over tables and lists. Maximize the size of labels and components. Cut unnecessary details like precise tick marks and gridlines. Annotate figures to draw the viewer to the key takeaways.

A Grid System

Set a grid system first. Widen column spacing to create more negative space. Decide how the poster should be read and arrange elements to tell the story. Number sections to help guide the reader.

Headings

Replace uninformative headings like "Methods" and "Results" with **informative statements** like "Assay to measure X" and "Levels of X determine the amount of Y".

Body

Write efficiently and chunk into short passages. Use bullets to highlight lists amongst text, but don't bullet every passage. Cut words, stay on message, and leave out extraneous details. Minimize the size of logos, acknowledgements, funding sources, and references to maximize the size of the rest.

Togetherness

Create a design for your poster and stick with it. Ensure consistency with fonts and font sizes, bold/italic/underline, colors, spacing, and other design elements.

You

It's your job to guide readers through. Practice your message—can you tell the story in 3-5 minutes? Get to know who you're talking to and tailor your message to them. Have a takeaway for visitors on the day of the conference. You can have business cards, a small handout, or a QR code.

Getting Started

1. Identify your story.
2. Create the visuals to support that story.
3. Layout your poster.
   a. Set a grid
   b. Pick a font or two
   c. Decide on key colors
   d. Write headings
   e. Arrange visuals
   f. Support it with text
4. Create the poster.
5. Forget about it for a few days.
6. Hop back in. Read Better Posters. Revise and perfect.

The URC and Posters

We print all Undergraduate Research Conference posters **for free**. The deadline is two weeks prior to conference. All posters require research advisor approval. We will also print, for free, any poster for any other conference provided you are presenting.

A Few Quick DOs

- Leave off the abstract
- Aim for <800 words
- Use dark text on light backgrounds
- Leave logos off or move to the bottom

Helpful Websites

http://betterposters.blogspot.com
http://www.eposters.net
http://thenounproject.com
http://academicposter.org
http://colinpurrington.com/

Contact Info

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"Your research is cool, so make it look cool"