

Creating an effective poster -- general guidelines from Xavier's CUR office

Creating a poster can be more time consuming than preparing an oral presentation.

- A poster is a way to *visually* communicate your study to a large number of people. When you give a talk, you *orally and visually* communicate your study.
- You want your poster to tell a story even if you aren't there to narrate! At conferences, there are "assigned" times for you to present your poster; at other times, your poster will be there without you, amidst many others for people to read (or not).
- Make sure that your poster is neat and is free of grammatical errors and typos. Prior to printing the "final" large poster, print out a smaller version and read it out loud. Correct the mistakes. Repeat as necessary. When you are sure you have corrected all the errors have a FRIEND read it out loud and look at it. Correct the errors. Then, e-mail your poster to the CUR office to print in color. (Be sure you have changed the size in "page setup" back to poster size!)
- **Posters will not be reprinted by CUR if you discover a typo.**

Organize your poster in columns

- People reading your poster will read it from the top left to the bottom left, then jump to the top of the next column and read down it.

A good poster has about 50% blank space, and lots of informative pictures and figures.

- Blank space can be used to highlight section breaks.
- Don't include a figure or a picture just to take up space. It should add to the person's understanding of the poster
- Make sure the authors and presenter are clearly listed on the poster.

Figures should dominate the poster

- Text should be used to augment the figures. Use this guideline: edit and cut AND THEN edit and cut AGAIN. Remember this is not a paper, it's a poster.
- Show your audience your main points using pictures and brief sections of text. If you bury your main points in blocks of text, nobody will read it! Nobody.
- Use informative figure titles: "Temperature versus movement "is not as effective as "Crabs move slower when it is cold".
- Experimental methods are usually best presented as a flowchart or figure, not text.
- If a detailed caption is necessary, put it directly below the figure.
- If you have bar graphs, color in all the columns. Make sure all your axis labels are large enough to read from a distance

Sections often included:

- Title, authors (include your mentor), affiliation(s)
- Introduction
- Results and Discussion
- Methods
- Conclusions and Future Studies (bulleted list works well)
- References and Acknowledgements

Creating an effective poster: the nitty gritty details

1. Create a new **Microsoft PowerPoint** file with a descriptive title.
2. In Powerpoint 2007: Click on the Design tab, then Page Setup.
 - Slide sized for: CUSTOM, Width 42" and Length 36"
 - Slides- LANDSCAPE (though Portrait is OK too)
 - background color: WHITE without fancy swirls etc, though XU's crest is OK.
 - **Your poster will be not be printed if the size or background color are wrong.**

If using Powerpoint 2003: Open Page Setup and set up as above.

3. In essence you are creating one giant PowerPoint slide with all your information.
 - You will have to change "view" as you work on your poster so that you can see the general layout and when you are typing in the text.
 - You can cut and paste in figures from Excel with no problems. Don't forget when you create your figures in Excel, use large fonts for axes and labels (at least 24) so that someone can read them from 1-2 m away.
 - You can cut/paste pictures with .jpeg extensions with no problems. Beware of pixilation; this means that a picture might look great on the web but once you put in on the poster and "pull" it to the appropriate size, lines show up in the picture or the color is uneven.
 - Figures/pictures should be at least 5"*7" in size.
 - You need to type in all your text using the text box feature of PowerPoint. Your title will be created in one text box. Author, institutional affiliation and contact information will be created in one text box. The subtitle INTRODUCTION will be a text box. The actual text of the introduction will be another text box. Each title for a figure will be a text box, etc. etc. etc. Sometimes, cutting and pasting text directly from Word doesn't work; you may need to type directly into the text box.
 - Here are general recommendations for font sizes for different parts of the poster
 - title 90-110
 - authors, institution, contact information 75-90
 - Subtitles (introduction, materials and methods etc) 36 bold
 - Main text- 32. NO SMALLER THAN 24 depending on the font
 - References or literature cited should be 18-24
 - People should be able to read your poster as they stand 1-2 m away from it.
 - Capitals and lower case words are easier to read THAN ALL CAPITALS
 - The font is important. Open round letters are easier to read than condensed letters
- Save your poster in PowerPoint as a powerpoint file.
- E-mail your file to gwillia9@xula.edu or cur@xula.edu.
- CUR currently picks up the cost of printing one poster per student project per semester. Be sure to proofread carefully. If any mistakes are found, CUR will not reprint it.

Special note to Mac users: depending how you cut and paste figures, sometimes they do not show up on a PC. You are advised to look at your poster on a PC and correct any problems before sending it to CUR for printing!