

Tips and Resources for Effectively Communicating via Poster

Tips for Effective Poster Communication

- **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.** Use a pleasing arrangement of graphics, text, colors. Your poster should be neat and uncluttered – use white space to help organize sections. Balance the placement of text and figures.
- **Organization.** Use headings to help readers find what they're looking for: objective, results, conclusions, etc. A columnar format helps traffic flow in a crowded poster session.
- **Minimize text – use graphics.** Keep text in blocks of no more than 50-75 words – don't create large, monolithic paragraphs of prose.
- **Text size.** All text should be large enough to read from 1-2 meters, including the text in figures. Title should be larger, to attract attention from far away.
- **Use color cautiously.** Dark letters on light background are easiest to read. Stick to a theme of 2-3 colors. Avoid overly bright colors – they attract attention but wear out reader's eyes.
- **Don't fight reader gravity**, which pulls the eyes from top to bottom (first), and left to right.
- **Include full contact information.** You want to be found – the reader should not have to look up anything to find you.
- **Prepare a 3-5 minute verbal explanation.** Some people will ask you to "walk me through your poster." When making such 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.
- **Prepare a summary handout.** You want people to remember your work – a handout provides a written record for readers. You can include a miniature version of your poster plus more detailed graphics, tables, and prose. The handout is something else you can refer to when talking to people about your work. Be sure to include complete contact information.

Tips for Clean Data Graphics

- **Focus on relationships** – exact values are usually not important.
- **Eliminate "chart junk"** to keep focus on data. 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.

Resources for Poster Presenters

- Creating Effective Poster Presentations: <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/> (visited July 11, 2011)
- KU Medical Center On-Line Tutorial Series: Effective Presentations: <http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/effective.html> (visited July 11, 2011)
- Developing Effective Poster Presentations: <http://www.afar.org/pdfs/SCP%20developing%20posters.pdf> (visited July 11, 2011)
- Creating an Effective Scientific Poster Presentation: http://www.tc.umn.edu/~schne006/tutorials/poster_design/index.htm (visited July 11, 2011)
- Guidelines for Oral Presentations: <http://go.owu.edu/~dapeople/ggpresnt.html>
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- Tosney, K. 2004. How to create a poster that graphically communicates your message.
- Tufte, E. 1997. Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative. Graphics Press, Cheshire
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