



## **Guide to Designing your Poster**

Posters are widely used within the academic community and at talks and conferences. They can be used for a variety of purposes. They can act as an advertisement for your area of work, a way of sparking debate or as a tool for raising awareness of an issue. To produce an effective poster there are a number of things that you might want to consider.

### **What is your purpose in creating this poster?**

A key purpose of your poster is to grab the attention of your chosen audience and to inspire interest in your area of research or practice development activity. It should convey a strong central message. It is not like an academic essay in this respect as it aims to relate details of your project in a brief and concise manner using bold text and colourful graphics to attract the viewers/readers attention.

### **Who is the audience likely to be? Tailor your approach accordingly...**

- Researchers?
- Students?
- Peers?
- Public?

Think about how much existing knowledge your chosen audience has about your research project. It is important to be aware of whether or not they understand your terminology and project before thinking about what information to include.

### **What content needs to be included?**

- Everything you include must relate in some way to your project including graphics and text.
- Make sure to include web links, references and contact details for further information.
- Remember, be selective! Do not try to cover the entire project. Focus on those aspects, which have most relevance for your chosen audience.

## **How should your poster be organised?**

Think about how much text should be given to explaining background information, aims/objectives and results. Think about the visual aesthetics of the poster. It is important that your poster is well designed. If the subject matter is not clear from 3 metres away, your audience will most likely not approach it. Preferably, all elements should be visible from at least 1.5m away. If you are only starting your poster then the preferred size that we would normally recommend is A0. **However**, if you have already designed your poster and it is not to this size specification, please do not be discouraged from submitting your poster as these are only our preferred guidelines and they are thus not compulsory ones.

## **Layout**

The layout of your poster should be both visually appealing and easy to follow. Like other types of academic writing the poster should be well organised with clear headings and subheadings. Depending on your content, you might choose to structure your poster in a variety of ways.

**Reporting on research** - Similar to a research report, this approach sets out your research according to the order in which it took place and would typically include: Background, Method, Results, Conclusion and References (usually 3-5 references).

**Reporting on the solution to a problem**- Alternatively a poster can be built around explaining how a particular problem was solved, concerning challenges addressed and barriers that have been overcome. This need not be as linear as a research report and might be more thematic.

## **Reading order**

In the first three seconds of looking at a poster, the reader is deciding whether to stay and explore the poster or move on. The most effective posters provide a discernible reading order with a clear sequence of information.

- A series of columns can be an effective way of ordering information as demonstrated in newspapers and magazines. In English speaking countries, the way people read a poster is commonly from top to bottom and from left to right.

- Balance - The best academic posters are well balanced. This means arranging text and images in such a way that both elements are balanced across the poster. Placing illustrations throughout the poster breaks the text up into easily readable chunks and allows for smoother flow. Balance can also mean ensuring that the poster is not cluttered. Blank space is not the enemy. In fact, like images, it serves to make text easier to read, allowing the reader to pause and take note.

### **Effective use of Text**

- Word count varies from poster to poster, typically between 400-800 words; no more than 1000 words.
- Be consistent with style. You should use a maximum of 2 type fonts per poster.
- Try to avoid font sizes below size 24 which will force the reader to stand very close. Font types that present well are Ariel, Tahoma, Calibri or Verdana.
- The main title on the poster should have a font size of between 60-80.
- The key headings such as introduction, methods etc. should use font size 36-48.
- The subtext needs to be size 28-32.
- No more than 3 paragraphs of text in a row.
- Be careful with dark font colours on dark backgrounds e.g. blue on black or vice versa, equally avoid light colours on light backgrounds e.g. yellow on white.
- Try to use Italics, underlining and CAPITALS sparingly.
- Group text according to subject matter but do not make paragraphs too long. Break up large paragraphs. Bullet points can be used to define simple statements.
- The clarity of text can be improved by using increased line spacing.
- Left justified and not fully justified text is much easier on the eye.
- Set headings in **BOLD** and make them concise.

### **Using Graphs and Images**

- When presenting numerical data use charts and graphs rather than tables as these can be more effective for illustrating data trends.
- When making charts and graphs format them effectively by keeping them simple, enlarging text and thickening lines.
- 3D graphs can be confusing, 2D are often clearest.
- For images try to use a high resolution JPEG (.jpg) with a resolution of at least 300 pixels per sq. inch for sharpness (images copied from internet are usually 72 pixels!).
- Include relevant logos of companies/institutions but you need to ensure that you have permission to use these logos.

## **Colour**

When using colour ensure that it does not obscure or detract from the text and images used in the body of the poster.

- Use subtle background colours and black for small text.
- Try not to use too many colours or colours, which clash, as this can be visually distracting.
- Think about people who are colour blind and have difficulty-differentiating colour.
- When printing the poster ensure that colours do not fade or run.

## **Final Check List**

1. Read your poster over carefully to check for any potential spelling mistakes.
2. Stand well back from your poster to see how it looks from afar.
3. Show it to someone else who has not seen it before and observe his or her reaction.

**Remember that these are only our preferred guidelines and they are thus not compulsory. Do not allow these guidelines to prevent you from submitting a poster to AIGNA for consideration, if you have already completed a poster for another conference or presentation.**

## **Contact us for more information if you wish:**

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