

Building your presentation poster

The formal poster is intended to share a condensed version of your work with a wider audience. For many of you, this will be your first attempt at producing a professional-level poster. For all, it will be your first opportunity to prepare a poster that will be computer-generated and printed. These guidelines are intended to facilitate the process.

One final word of caution: to do this well, you must plan ahead and begin early. Do give yourself enough lead time to proof your poster [and have someone else look it over too] before you bring it to the printer. Do plan to send it to the printer at least 48 hours before the poster is actually due. If you wait until the last moment, problems can not be corrected.

Basic steps in the process of developing a poster from your research project

1. Organize your information

You will need to provide a full outline of your project, with information matching the categories typically found in a lab report. The information included should be clear and concise, and should be presented in a mix of verbal and graphic formats;. You should include each of the following areas:

- Title
- Introduction [background, basic concepts, significance, application] Maximum length ~200 words
- Methods [a brief summary of key details of your procedures] Maximum length ~ 200 words
- Results Maximum length ~ 200 words [plus tables and/or graphs]
- Discussion/ conclusions Maximum length ~300 words

Prepare brief text paragraphs on each of these areas. Some topics may have more impact as separate sentences rather than as a formal paragraph text block. Some topics, such as the methods section, may be presented as bullet points or as a flow chart.

Some of the information on your poster should be presented graphically. Incorporate some of the following elements as appropriate.

- Photographic images: a digital image of the organism/ object of study, or of some step in your procedure
- Line drawings: a diagram of a step in your procedure; a drawing showing before/ after contrast
- Flow chart: showing a sequence of related events
- Timeline: showing the progress of development or the steps in your procedure
- Graph: various forms of graphs or charts can be used to display data
- Table: another form of data display

In addition, you should include small sections for Acknowledgements and Citations. Limit your citations to 2 or 3 references that were of particular value. Use standard format for listing the citation. Acknowledgements should be used if some individual or agency provided specific assistance, materials, or advice.

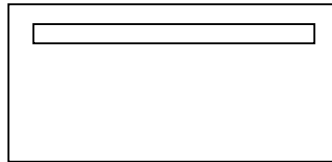
Prepare this material in advance. Using Microsoft Office, store the various elements as individual files within a single folder. [Identify the folder as Embryology Presentation; identify the files by their contents so you can quickly find them.] You can use both Word and Excel files. Add any photo images to the same folder. Line drawings can be tricky. If you are not skilled in using a computer graphics program, you may want to draw your illustration on paper, digitally photograph or scan it, and transfer it to a computer file.

2. Plan your layout

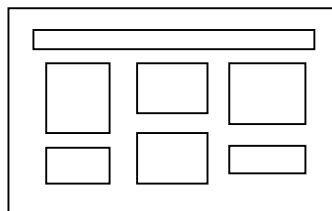
Your final poster will be 36" high by 48" wide. It should have a mixture of roughly equal amounts of text and graphics, as well as eye-relieving "white space"; The goal is to achieve a balance that is visually appealing, easy to read, and fully informative.

Using a blank sheet of notebook paper, block out the layout of your poster. There are several concepts that you should keep in mind as you plan your layout.

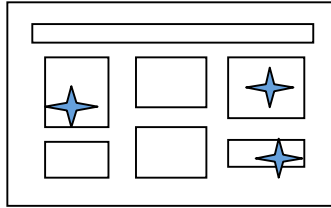
- The title [and your names] is positioned as a banner across the top of the poster



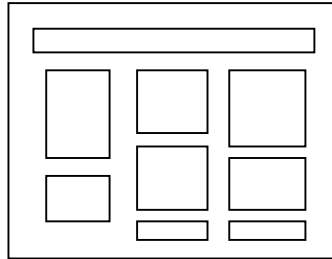
- Position the major elements in a logical order. The poster should be "read" in columns from left to right. This lets people in a crowd reach each section before moving on to the next.



- Save "big ticket" elements for "starring" positions – a mention of the significance of the study should appear early; your final conclusions should appear prominently along the right column as "clinchers".



- Save space at the bottom of the poster for items like Acknowledgements and Citations



- Strive for:
 - Logical flow of ideas
 - Visual impact
 - Brevity
 - Clarity
 - Balance
 - Emphasis

Remember: you will have flexibility throughout the creative process.

3. Explore your options

You don't have to work from ground zero in designing your poster. There is a wide selection of poster templates available on line;. If you wish, download a template and use it to guide your organization. Or just check out the templates to see what works well. Here are some sites worth checking out:

<http://teaching.ucdavis.edu/poster/template.htm>

4. Consider these fundamental guidelines

- Leave a one inch margin on all edges
- Your text and graphics should be legible from a distance of roughly five to six feet.
- Use color for impact, but use it sparingly – two or three colors are sufficient
- Generally, use a 30% grey value contrast between neighboring color blocks
- For your title, choose a large bold san serif font in a large [72-120 point] size. Good fonts include **Arial Black**, Franklin Gothic Heavy, Tahoma, Trebuchet, or Verdana.
 - Use the same font in smaller size for subtitles and section headings

- Subtitles [author name and institution] 48-80 point
 - Section headings [Introduction, Results, Conclusions, etc] 36-72 points Generally
 - these section headings should be about 50% larger than the text body.
- For your text body use a readable serif style font such as Book Antiqua, Bookman Old Style, or Garamond. Use a font size of 24-48 points. A smaller point size of the same font can be used in captions for illustrations.
- Never use all capitals; it is harder to read and it feels like you are “shouting”.
- Avoid long blocks of text
- Avoid using “cute” or superfluous graphics. If a graphic doesn’t add information, delete it.
- Do let well-designed, self-explanatory, useful graphics dominate the poster. A good balance is 30-40% graphics, 30-40% text, and 20-30% white space.
- Make your graphics simple. Label them clearly. Use thick lines on your graphs for easy visibility.
- Plan ahead.
- Save your work – repeatedly. If it is not saved, it can be lost.

5. Build your poster

You will construct your poster on a single screen on Microsoft Powerpoint. These instructions are for Powerpoint 2007, the system loaded on the North Park University computers.

- Open Powerpoint. Powerpoint will open with a new presentation and a blank title slide.
- On the **Slides** group on the ribbon bar, click the **Layout** button to view various slide layouts. Select the **Blank** layout [this will remove the placeholder boxes].
- Click on the **Design** tab on the Ribbon. Choose **Page Setup** [on the far left of the screen]. A Page Setup box will appear. In the first line of this box, where it says **Slides sized for:** scroll down to select **Custom**. In the **Width:** box, enter **36** inches; in the **Height:** box enter **48** inches. Under **Orientation**, select **Landscape**.
- Go to the **View** tab and click on **Zoom**. Change the zoom level to **18%**.
- **Save** your poster – and don’t forget to save it periodically as you continue to work.

To display gridlines to guide the placement of elements on the slide, right-click on a blank area of the slide and select **Grid and Guidelines**. When the dialog box appears, select **Display drawing guides on screen**. Set Grid settings spacing to **.25** inches

- To insert your title, go to the **Insert** tab. Select **Text Box** and click on your slide. A text box will appear. Type your poster title and your names in the text box. Highlight the text and select the font you wish to use. Select the point size [choose a larger point size for the title]. Using the four-headed arrow, drag the text box into position, centered at the top of the slide. If necessary, you may resize the box by using the “drag handles” on the corners and sides of the text box.

- To insert blocks of text, you can construct a text box and either cut and paste text from your previously written file or you can type text directly into the text box. I found that it was easier to type material directly into the textbox.
- If you wish to add color to the background of your textboxes, right-click on the inside of the textbox. A dialog box will appear. Select **Format shape**. You can now select a color and style to fill the box [remember to stick with relatively pale colors]. On the left side of the box, you can choose **Line color** and go on to place a border around your textbox.
- Images, Excel tables, and graphs can all be imported, sized, and positioned on the poster in the same fashion.

6. Resize and rearrange

Once you have built your first version of the poster, print out a small-scale version of the poster. You may see some areas that can be improved. Now is the time to make these adjustments. You may change your fonts, resize text boxes and images, rearrange components of the poster to make the poster more visually appealing. You may need to edit some of the text boxes for clarity or simply for brevity. Be ruthless! Eliminate any redundancy or pointless padding.

7. Seek an outsider's opinion

Print out an 8 ½ x 11 version of your edited poster. Does it carry the impact you want? Does it clearly convey your message? Show it to a neutral party – your roommate, some unsuspecting classmate, a writing advisor, or someone else whose opinion you respect – and ask them to critique it for you. Listen to their comments and go back to step 6, or if necessary even to step 1, and make the poster better. [This really is a useful step...]

8. Print your poster!

Bring your file with the poster to the printer on the second floor of Carlson Tower. You may bring your own laptop, the file on a zip drive, or have your poster file on your account in the NPU computer system.

To set up for printing:

1. Turn on the printer in Carlson 25 [simply push the power-on button on the top of the printer]
2. Log onto a computer in Carlson 22. Add the printer/plotter as the selected printer.
 - a. Go to Add a printer. Select Connect to this printer
 - b. The printer name is: [\\print-1\Carlson25](#) Plotter
 - c. Click on next; a new screen will appear
 - d. Select No when asked about making it the default printer. Click on next. And on the next screen, click on Finish.
3. Configure your preferences. Click on Print.

- a. Select Scale to paper size: Custom
4. On the print screen, click on Properties.
 - a. Select the Features tab.
 - b. Choose Print document on B1(JIS)
 - c. Click OK
5. You should be good to go!

Do you need other suggestions? Here are a few web sites that might be helpful.

<http://abacus.bates.edu/~bpfohl/posters/>

<http://faculty.washington.edu/robinet/poster.html>

<http://www.biology.lsa.umich.edu/research/labs/ktosney/file/PostersHome.html>

<http://www.people.eku.edu/ritchisong/posterpres.html>

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurrin1/posteradvice.htm>

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