

Effective Poster Presentations

The poster you create needs to clearly provide your readers or audience with an interesting overview and summary of key information. Your poster presentation may need you to orally explain or present your work, and to answer questions. You need to convince your readers or audience that your work is of a high standard. The main steps in preparing an effective poster presentation are: plan, structure, design and create, and present.

Plan

Purpose:

- Decide on the main ideas that your audience needs to know, in order for them to understand your work.
- Is your main purpose to communicate information and ideas, or to influence other people's opinions and behaviour?

Audience:

- Consider what you know about your audience. What are they likely to know? What do they need to learn from you? What are effective ways to interest, inform and engage them?

Structure

A poster normally has these parts:

- Title
- Summary
- Main ideas/information that have a logical flow
- Illustrations e.g. pictures, photographs, tables and charts

Design & Create

- Find out the possible or required dimensions for your poster.
- Can you choose the page orientation (portrait or landscape)?
- Is poster paper the best medium?
- Microsoft PowerPoint is a useful software for creating parts or sections of your poster.
- Remember to include a reference list of your sources of information. Refer to APA Referencing: A Guide for Ara Institute of Canterbury for more information.
- You may need stationery like scissors, sellotape, double-sided tape, velcro, blue tack and pushpins.

Layout

- For ideas on layout refer to:
 - Sample posters at websites like <https://ugs.utexas.edu/our/poster/samples> and <https://sites.google.com/ncsu.edu/effective-posters/examples>
 - SmartArt graphics in Microsoft Word or Microsoft PowerPoint.
- You need to decide on an attractive, neat and logical layout that is easy to read and understand.
- Consider the overall proportion and balance of each layout; how many sections will you divide your poster into?
- Draw a number of alternative layouts of your poster that includes your title, headings, text and illustrations.
- Place your title prominently.
- Put your information in boxes.
- Use arrows to indicate the logical flow of ideas.
- Logically sequence your main ideas using numbers or bullet points.
- Leave enough blank space around your key information; do not overcrowd your poster.
- Ask other people which layout is most pleasing and effective in conveying your information.
- Allow yourself some time to decide on the layout; you may have new ideas.

Fonts

- Make sure the lettering on your poster is typed, so that it can be easily read.
- Use fonts such as Arial or Verdana as they are easy to read.
- Size 20 is about the minimum size for text that can be comfortably read.
- Use larger font sizes for sub-headings and headings.

Colours

- A light-coloured background like pastel or grey is easy to view and often gives the best contrast for your text and illustrations.
- Often the use of two or three colours is enough to emphasise information or to make connections or distinctions between information.
- Colours need to be pleasant; avoid overly bright colours as they can distract your audience.
- The colour you choose for your text needs to be easily legible against the background e.g. black text on a white background.
- Make sure your poster is easy to transport to the place of presentation: Can it be rolled up? Do you need to transport separate parts of your poster for assembly later?

Present

Practise giving your poster presentation:

- Refer to the Learning Services' handout, Effective Oral Presentations, for speaking tips.
- During your presentation listen carefully to the questions asked. Answer directly, clearly and concisely.