

SIX SIMPLE RULES FOR CREATING A GOOD POSTER

Posters are a snapshot of your work and are intended to engage colleagues in a dialog about your research. Listed below are six simple rules for creating a strong poster.

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| Know Your Audience | Before you create your poster, consider who your audience will be. Where are you presenting? Who is likely to be in attendance? Novice researchers, medical students, residents, seasoned scientists, expert clinicians? Consider how much knowledge your audience will have about your topic area before you begin so you can tailor the content to them. Understanding your audience can help you identify how much technical language or jargon is appropriate and how much background to provide. It can also help you determine which conclusions or implications to highlight in your poster. Include only what's most relevant! |
| Sell Your Work in Ten Seconds | First impressions matter, especially at large conferences where hundreds of posters may be showcased. Sell your work to your audience. Consider what decisive question you are answering with your research and practice a ten second summary of this question and how you answered it to share during your presentation. Use the visual elements of your poster (such as the title, photos or graphs) to engage your audience, provoke questions about your topic and draw people into conversation. |
| The Title Is Important | The title is one of the best ways to sell your work and draw in prospective audience members. It should be large enough to see from a distance (66-72 pt font) and should inspire people to want to come and learn about your work. Your title might pose a question, define the scope of the study, or hint at a new finding. It should be short, sharp and compelling. |
| Layout and Format Are Critical | Posters should have a clear structure and flow. Use your abstract as a guide and make sure to include a succinct summary of the motivation or background of your research, the hypothesis to be tested, methods, results and conclusions or implications. Guide your reader from one section to the next with arrows, numbering, or spacing. A white background with colored section headers often makes for the most visually appealing and clear poster. |
| Your Conclusions Will Keep Your Audience | We have learned from experience that the audience likes to read conclusions first and then move on to the methods and results. Keep this in mind as you develop your poster and be sure to include a clear and obvious set of conclusions. Everything on your poster should be purposeful and help convey your key message. |
| The Impact of Your Poster Depends on You | Be present at the conference to engage with your audience and answer questions. Make it easy for a conference attendee to contact you afterwards by having your contact information on the poster and having hard copies of your poster (8.5 x 11) for people to take home with them. Remember that good posters and their presentations can foster wonderful connections with others. It's important to take advantage of these opportunities and to prepare in advance to ensure the maximum benefit of your time. |
| <i>Adapted from Erren TC, Bourne PE (2007) Ten Simple Rules for a Good Poster Presentation. PLoS Comput Biol 3(5): e102. doi:10.1371/journal.pcbi.0030102</i> | |