**POSTER DESIGNS**

1. CLARITY OF CONTENT

A**. Clear central theme**

* On average, a viewer will spend 5-7 minutes looking at your poster presentation.
* So, before you start gathering and sorting through images, graphs, and charts, take a step back and ask yourself the following question:*"If a viewer was only able to take away one thing from looking at my poster, what would that one thing be?"*
* Got an answer? Well congratulations. That is the overall theme of your poster. All of the text, images, charts, and graphs are going to help reinforce that theme.

B. **Supporting Content**

* Bulleted information easy to grasp
* Relation of bulleted information to theme obvious

C. **Less is More**

* Do not overstate details.
* Give a brief background and summarize, summarize, summarize
* The point of a poster is to open up dialogue with viewers so that you should include only absolutely necessary detail. Knowing what is unnecessary requires judgment, yes, but here’s a tip: If you go overboard with details, no one will stick around to read them all, or, if they do, they will not have any questionsto ask or any reason to have a conversation with you.

2. DESIGN AND LAYOUT

1. **Major sections clear** **from a distance**: At a distance of three to four feet away, an individual should be able to quickly understand what each section is and why it is there.
2. **Spacing of content**: Negative or empty space is essential for a poster to be easily readable. Avoid excessive text. Poster should have roughly 20% text, 40% figures, 40% space.

* Too much space can be as difficult as too little empty space. Do not have small text boxes swimming in too much empty space.
* Too little: Resist cramming every bit of information on to your poster. For example, don’t run your content up to the edge of the page; make sure to leave some space.
* Summarize paragraphs and consider grouping related text and data together with a border, so your reader can more easily digest bits of information.

1. **Flow:** The natural flow of a poster is in columns (vertically) that flow from left to right. "How many columns?" you ask. The size, width, and number of columns you have depends on the size of your font (and your content overall). The reader should be able to easily scan a line of text and move to the next line without losing place (too long/ wide) or getting a headache from jumping to the next line every 5 words (too short/ narrow).
2. **Font**: When it comes to fonts and font styles, the possible combinations are endless. The key is not to go overboard and be sure to follow some basic font guidelines.

* Titles and headings should appear larger than other text, but not too large.
* Two common fonts that are easy on the eyes are Arial and Verdana. Often combinations have one serif and one sans serif font—often titles are serif fonts and text is sans serif, but the reverse can work, too. And having two different fonts but both sans serif can work, as well. Other common combinations for titles versus body of text are: Helvetica/Garamond; Caslon/Univers; Futura/Bodoni; Garamond/Futura; Gill Sans/Caslon; Minion/Gill Sans; Myriad/Minion; Caslon/Franklin Gothic; Trade Gothic/Clarendon; Franklin Gothic/Baskerville
* It is important to try to avoid using more than 2 font types because too many fonts distract the viewer. This is especially true when they appear on the same sentence.
* Keeping in mind that suggestions are based on a specific poster size, here are a few general size guidelines for your scientific poster:

**For the major sections of the poster:**

Title: **85pt**

Authors: **56pt**

Sub-headings: **36pt**

Body text: **24pt**

Captions: **18pt**

**As for legibility, the following sizes are a good starting point:**

To be **legible 6 feet** use **30 pt**.

To be **legible 10 feet** use **48 pt**.

To be **legible 12 feet** use **60 pt**.

To be **legible 14 feet** use **72 pt**.

1. **Layout of Text**

* Generally, putting information in "bullet" form is better than using sentences.
* Use sans serif fonts: these fonts are more legible than serif fonts from a distance.
* Headings and other text having the same level of importance should be the same font size.
* Text and figures should be legible from around 5-7 feet away (or roughly 1.5m to 2m) (see our text size suggestions below)
* Do not use a different font type to highlight important points - otherwise the fluency and flow of your sentence can appear disrupted.
* Do not use all UPPER CASE type in your posters. It can make the material difficult to read.
* Use the **bold face** or *italics* or combinations to emphasize words and phrases.
* Left-align text. Using fully justified text will create large gaps between some words and make it difficult to read.
* Microsoft should automatically change straight quotation marks ( ' or " ) to curly (smart or typographer's) quotes ( ‘ or “ ) as you type. If your document is not doing this, follow the video or follow the steps below to correct that.

1. **Colors**
   * Consider people who have problems differentiating colors. One of the most common is an inability to tell green from red. Choose high contrast (light yellow on deep burgundy works better than bright yellow on bright red).
   * When choosing colors for your poster, using 2-3 colors will give the best look. Too many colors make it look chaotic and unprofessional, but having no color makes it boring and plain.
   * Consider pulling a color pattern from a key image
   * If you are creating images on the computer, note that colors may appear different on your screen due to differences in monitors and the printing process. Blue text on a black background and vice versa is particularly hard to read. Even though there may seem to be enough contrast on screen, it does not print well. Try using a light grey instead of black, or lighter blue in the place of navy.
   * *Background*: Try to stay away from anything that is too busy. Often times a solid tone, or a very simple gradient is the best option. Also, choose a color that will complement the color you have chosen for your font. Some creative works may be best represented with bold backgrounds, but compensate with clear text in contrasting colors and large enough font sizes.
   * *Contrast*:
     + The background and text should have a high contrast. To ensure this, use a light color for the background with a dark colored text or a darker background with light text.
     + Whatever colors you use, the background should not distract from the content itself.
     + Where possible, let the most important item have the most important color and the greatest contrast with its background.
     + If you are not a designer and this is your first research poster, we suggest sticking to light colored backgrounds. This offers more combinations and flexibility when designing your poster.
     + Avoid very bright color combinations: if it makes you squint, don’t use it!
     + Blues especially don't represent true to color on screen and tend to print purple. On screen your file may appear to have a blue background. In order to avoid this issue, change the RGB value of the blue color in question to contain less red (R) and more blue (B).**Some good blue values: Navy: (0, 30, 102) Cobalt Blue: (0, 51, 153) True Blue: (0, 0, 255)**
2. **Graphs and Images**

* Be sure to include a brief caption for your figures, and explicitly refer to the figure in the text.
* *Charts and graphs* must include a title and labels for each axis in order to be meaningful. Failure to include these will require you to constantly explain what the chart or graph means.
  + Interpreting legends is sometimes very difficult, and you should do anything in your power to make your graphs clearly understood by the viewer.
  + Don’t just take you graph “as is” from the program you have created it in.
  + Make numbers or other labels on the vertical axis read horizontally (not sideways vertically)
  + Keep the look clean; remove unnecessary “ink” like background colors or grids or pattern fills of bars (use solid colors only).
* *Resolution*:
  + Choosing to put a low resolution graphic on your poster shows a lack of care and attention to detail, and can detract from the quality of your research. Aim for 150 dpi, but no more than 300 dpi.
  + Do not enlarge images which will lower the resolution.
* *Scanned photos or other images*: Save them in .JPG format. PowerPoint can import most JPG files easily. As far as what resolution you should scan your file at, 300 dpi is usually a good starting point.
  + To get an idea of how well a scanned image will print, open the file and zoom in on it until the image fills your entire screen. If it looks pixelated and jaggy the resolution is probably too low and the image should be rescanned at a higher resolution.
  + On the flip side, if you use a resolution that is too high you may end up creating a graphic (and therefore PowerPoint file) with an unnecessarily large file size that becomes hard to transmit and open. That is why you should not go higher than 300 dpi.
* *Borders*: To set off the image from the background.
  + Choose a line color that is complimentary to both your poster and the image.
  + Avoid using lines with a thickness less than 2 points as they won't show up on your poster because they are so thin!

**3. Dress**

* Consider matching the color scheme of your poster!
* In any case, dress professionally—do not call attention to your clothing—use clothing as you do the background of your poster. The focus should be on what you are saying, not what you are wearing.

(Guidelines for poster design modified from tips at Makesigns.com)