

Making a great poster can be fun and is certainly a challenge! Here are some ideas about how to get the most attention for your efforts.

I. A GREAT POSTER IS...

readable,

Readability is a measure of how easily the ideas flow from one item to the next. Text that has lots of grammatical problems, complex or passive sentence structure, and misspellings is "hard to read".

legible,

If a text is legible, it can be deciphered. For example, an old book may not be legible if the paper has corroded or the lettering has faded. A common error in poster presentations is use of fonts that are too small to be read from 6-10 feet away, a typical distance for reading a poster.

well organized, and

Spatial organization makes the difference between reaching 95% rather than just 5% of your audience: time spent hunting for the next idea or piece of data is time taken away from thinking about the science.

succinct.

Studies show that you have only 11 seconds to grab and retain your audience's attention so make the punchline prominent and brief. Most of your audience is going to absorb only the punchline. Those who are directly involved in related research will seek you out anyway and chat with you at length so you can afford to leave out **all** the details and tell those who are really interested the "nitty gritty" later.

II. TWO WAYS TO MAKE A POSTER ARE TO

have someone else do it, or

A professional illustrator will ask you about all the items in this presentation! Although they will execute the work, you are the final arbiter of the quality and content of the poster.

make your own.

III. TO BEGIN:

decide what the main message is,

Keep it short and sweet and make this your title! Use the active voice and avoid the verb "to be" whenever possible.

measure the space you have,

Laying out the space physically as well as on paper is a quick way to double check yourself. If you can, make the poster flexible enough to change the size by adding or omitting elements. This flexibility is handy if you are going to more than one meeting and the meetings differ in size requirements for posters or if you wish to update your data.

lay out your elements crudely,

Before you actually spend time making the final elements of the poster, take pieces of paper that are about the right size and see if you can actually make it all fit. This will save you a lot of time in the long run.

ELIMINATE all extraneous material,

Given that the average poster gazer spends less than 10 minutes on your work and you have 11 seconds to trap your subject before they move on, only show data that adds to your central message.

V. FONT CHOICE:

sizes,

A good rule is to stand back from your own poster: if you, who is familiar with the material, cannot easily read it from 6 feet away, your audience will certainly not be able to.

highlighting with text format,

Indents set text apart and are great for short lists. Justification of text in the center of a line will draw attention. Use bold-face, color, or special characters to draw attention.

VI. COLOR

ways to add color,

Mounting boards are a fast way to add a color border to poster elements. Choosing a color that does not compete with your data is wise. Colored yarn is effective in visually linking poster elements.

Colored graphic tape or dots, and white arrows (Chartpak, Lettraset) can be quickly applied to poster elements to draw attention to the elements you wish to.

contrast,

Proper contrast will reduce eye strain and make the poster more legible and interesting visually. Again, be careful that the color does not outclass the visual impact of your data: too much contrast is hard on the eyes and can distract the reader from your data. Adding light color backgrounds to your figures can make the poster attractive. For example, using white lettering and lines on a blue background can make your poster eye-catching. Poster elements can also be double matted to add interesting contrast.

VII. FINAL CHECK BEFORE YOU ASSEMBLE THE POSTER

Have some people look over your poster before you put it all together. If they are confused, it is far better to fix it now than to lose people at the meeting. Pay particular attention to things that may not be necessary: eliminate everything that you can!

1. **Design an effective poster.** It is important to make your poster attractive and easy to read.
 - Choose a background color that will not overwhelm the message
 - Use appropriate pictures or graphics
 - Choose fonts that are easy to read - consider colour, size and be careful not to mix too many different fonts
2. **Decide how you will make your poster.** Are you going to make a poster on cardboard by hand? Or do you have access to a computer and printer? Make it in the way that is easiest and most effective for you.
 - *Computer:* Some computer programs allow you to make much larger posters by sticking several printed pages together. If not, you can use a large piece of lightweight cardboard and print off the message, pictures, title etc. separately and stick them onto the cardboard neatly. Decorate the poster edges with borders or other eye-catching features.
 - *By hand:* If you cannot print a poster, choose the person with the best printing skills and use poster paints and bright and easy-to-use markers or pencils to make the posters. As with the computer version, make sure to decorate in an eye-catching way.
3. **Choose one simple, memorable message.** Place this message in large lettering that will attract attention. More detailed information can also be added in smaller lettering.
4. **Add your information.** If you are making your own information posters, you should get the information from a reliable source, such as from books, people working in the field or on reputable internet sites.
5. **Have your information checked.** Have your information checked by somebody with expertise in the subject. It might be someone who works or volunteers in a non-government organization or public office, for example, or a teacher. Also get somebody to spell check the information.
6. **Include contact information.** The point of your poster is to get attention. You will also want people to know where they can come for more information, so include contact details such as a phone number or an e-mail address.
7. **Think carefully about where you will put up your posters.** Try to find a location where lots of people will pass by but where they will not get lost in the crowd.

Tips

- Light colored paper, like cream, is great for the background.
- Remember, a poster doesn't always consist of a cut-up essay.
- Larger organizations involved in the issue you have chosen may have posters that you can use for public information.