Poster Preparation Tips

A conference poster serves as a visual presentation of the project supported by an oral presentation and Q&A experience. Think of the poster as an advertisement to entice people into a discussion. The poster should not substitute for a full read of the research paper.

Audience: For the Celebration of Scholarship, the poster and your oral presentation should tell the story of your research to a layperson.

Content:
Don't try to explain EVERYTHING in the poster, only the highlights. Leave your audience wanting more. Aim for a word count between 300 to 800 words.

The commonly used sections include some variation of:

- Title, Author(s), Affiliation
- Abstract
- Purpose/Research Question/Objectives/Main Argument/Problem
- Introduction/Background/Literature Review
- Methods and Materials/Study Design/Data collection
- Analysis/Discussion/Insight
- Key Results/Findings/Significance
- Conclusion/Recommendations/Future Directions
- References/Acknowledgements

> Keep it simple.
>
> Less is more.

Layout & Style:
- The sections are typically presented in 3 to 4 columns and should be well organized.
- Keep formatting consistent in terms of headings and sub headings.
- Use images, graphics, and tables to convey information. A good ratio is 50/50 graphics to text. Beware of text heavy content. Graphics should be high resolution due to the size when printed.
- Keep a balance between content and white space. White space is good.
- Keep the text boxes aligned unless you have a rationale for a chaotic and disturbing display.
- Bulletpoints are an effective use of space.

Fonts:

Type:	Sans serif fonts are commonly used for headings (Arial or Helvetica); Serif fonts for the text (Times New Roman, Cambria). Limit use to 2 complementary or contrasting font styles.
Size:	80-90 pt for the title; 36-48 for the headers; 24-36 for the body. Text should be easy to read from a distance.
Color:	Black or a strong contrast to the background of the poster
Style:	Avoid underlining. Bold section headings. Italics can be used sparingly.

Presentation Tips*

Preparing your presentation:
- Practice 2, 5, and 10-minute versions of your poster presentation.
- Make sure you can sum up your poster's key points and conclusions in 2-3 sentences.
- Practice starting your spiel from different sections of your poster.
- Think about which parts of your poster will be the most challenging to explain.
- Anticipate questions and how you will answer them

Performing your presentation:
- Greet people with a smile and show your enthusiasm for your work.
- Do not stand in front of your poster where you might block people's view. Stand to the side or turn sideways at the side of the poster without blocking the adjacent poster.
- Maintain eye contact with people as you present your poster. Do not read directly from your poster or from a prepared script. Reading signals "lack of knowledge" to the audience.
- Use hand gestures to illustrate and reinforce key concepts and relationships. As you talk through your poster, use a pointer or your hands to refer to particular parts of the poster so that people can follow your talk. Do not put your hands in your pockets or behind your back.
- Spend extra time explaining the figures and tables on your poster.
- If people approach your poster after you have begun your spiel, pause to welcome them and identify where you are in the spiel, "Hi, I'm in the middle of explaining the methods we used to characterize the XXX protein."
- Check your audience's understanding of the more complex concepts presented in your poster by paying attention to non-verbal cues or by asking them whether YOU have been clear or should go into a little more detail. DO NOT ask whether THEY understand what you've said.
  For example, say, "Should I say a little more about how the algorithm operates?" "Have I been complete enough?" or "Would you like me to go over any of the parts again?"
- Maintain your professionalism.
- Thank people for listening and talking with you about your project: "Thanks for stopping to talk with me." "Thanks for your feedback on the XXX mechanism." Make your comment show YOU WERE LISTENING TO THEM, not just talking at them. (Don't use a cliché such as "thank you for your time," and don't apologize, either).

Remember that the people attending the poster session may be future your employers or research collaborators.

*Source: Roundtree, Aimee. "Posters for Humanities and Social Sciences Student Research Conference." University of Houston-Downtown