2003 REU Communications Workshop

“Preparing a scientific poster presentation”

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Objectives

♦ The poster should act as “bait”
  - Wandering audience, not committed to you
  - 11 seconds to catch someone’s attention
    → 10 minutes spent on poster

♦ Include enough content to further discussion
  “Walk me through your poster”

♦ Leave a lasting impression
  - Visually & conceptually
  - Advertisement for yourself and your work
Significance

- **Most common formal presentation**
  - Large conferences & limited # of speakers
  - Lots of posters (probably majority of presentations)

- **Discussion & immediate feedback**
  - Most interactive form of scientific communication
  - Demonstrate scientific knowledge & interpersonal skills
  - Do people “get what you do”?
What It’s Not
What It Shouldn’t Be

♦ Messy
♦ Cramped
♦ Unorganized
♦ Difficult to read
♦ Unbalanced
♦ Disproportionate
What It Is

- Static, visual medium
  - Let the poster “do the talking”

- Introduction to your work
Advantages/Limitations

♦ Advantages
- Viewer free to read at own pace
- Large canvas to present figures/illustrations
- Less practice than an oral presentation (less stress)
- Personal interaction with audience members
- Entire project on display

♦ Limitations
- Have to attract the audience
- Space constraint
- Takes a lot of time to prepare & polish
- Have to “present” repeatedly over longer period of time
Before You Begin

♦ Sketch out the envisioned layout
  - Poor planning can’t be disguised

♦ Know the size restrictions
  - Use the fully allotted space
  - Landscape or portrait?
  - Space dictates content
Choice of Format

1) Large, single sheet

2) Letter-size panels

3) Combination
Keys to an Effective Poster

- Organized & well laid out
- Easy to see & read from a distance
- Maximize graphics/minimize text
- Use of lists and bullet points
- Avoid grammar/spelling mistakes
- Simple, non-distracting background
- BALANCE!
Layout

♦ Posterboards typically horizontal (4’ x 8’ feet)
  - Always check allotted space ahead of time!

♦ Flow of information
  - Vertical columns (like newspaper)
  - Horizontal rows
  - Centered focus with branching panels (uncommon)

♦ Remember the rule of 1/3’s
  - Divide canvas into 9 quadrants
Main Sections

**Required:**
1) Title - author names and affiliation
2) Introduction - stressing relevance/significance
3) Results - most important data to convey point
4) Conclusion - main points (listed as bullet points)

**Beneficial:**
1) Abstract - included in poster OR printed copies provided
2) Materials & Methods - schematics moreso than text
3) Future Work
4) Acknowledgments
Formatting

Organization
- Title – top, center
- Abstract – upper left
- Conclusion – bottom right

Color scheme
- Good contrast between different colors
- No more than 3-4 colors
- Select a light background (easier to read against)
Efficient delivery of the main message
- Omit a lot of details
- Provide enough to comprehend ideas

Do not use all UPPER CASE

Leave spacing between lines
- One and a half or double space

Headings: 3-4 words long

Aligned left or justified
- Watch for wide or awkward spacing
Fonts & Sizing

- Be consistent throughout
  - Use only 2 font types

- Should be readable from 4-5 feet away

**Styles:**
- sans-serif (titles, headings) Arial
- serif (text) Times

**Sizing:**
- Title: > 84 pt
- Name & school: > 72 pt
- Headings: > 36 pt
- Text: 18-24 pt
Title

- No more than 8 words, preferably
  - Keep it to one line

- Place at the top in the center
  - First place people naturally look
  - Center the text

- Make it stand out
  - “Punchline” - prominent, but brief

- Authors & affiliation immediately below
  - Underline presenting author
The art of effective scientific communication skills

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Figures

- Every figure needs a legend
  - Enough information to stand alone
- Clear labels, arrows, scale bars
- Present only the most pertinent results
- Arrange in logical order of progression
Tips for Presenting a Poster

♦ Try to stay by it the whole time
  - Don’t get distracted by others

♦ Smile, posture, look interested

♦ Provide small handouts of poster
  - The text, as well as visually catching

♦ Have business cards/CV’s with you

♦ Provide an envelope for business cards
  - Request re-prints or other info