Poster Design: The Basics

Irene Svete
Washington NASA Space Grant Consortium

July 2012

Purpose

- Academic posters are a summary of what you did, how you did it and what you learned.
- Most are divided into four parts:
  - Introduction (what you did)
  - Design or methods (how you did it)
  - Results
  - Conclusion (what you learned)
- Remember, space is limited. Choose your words and graphics carefully.

Getting started

A poster should be visually simple, yet highly informative.
Programs for poster design

- **MS PowerPoint** (most popular)
- Open Office Impress (an open source ppt)
- Adobe Creative Suite
  - Adobe Illustrator
  - Adobe Photoshop
  - Adobe InDesign
  - Adobe FreeHand (formerly Macromedia)
- LaTeX (mostly for Linux users)
- "Old school" (paper, scissors, glue stick, etc)

First Step for Powerpoint/Impress

- Open a New Presentation [ppt]
- Change page size: 40" wide x 32" high
Adobe Options

Poster elements

Words
- Title
- Section headings
- Captions
- Body Text

Borders
- Backgrounds

Graphics
- Photos
- Charts
- Graphs
- Illustrations

Layout

Experiment with the different program features
- Creating text boxes
- Adding images [insert or copy/paste]
- Adding graphs [copy/paste, check font size]
- Adding tables [copy/paste, create table & copy/paste content]
- Background, etc.
Earth, you would weigh only 57

If you weighed 150 pounds on

QUICK FACT:

Although numerous studies have been done on the effects of

approximately 3/8 the gravity of Earth.

Partial gravity is any level of gravity between Earth gravity and

Trips to Mars

Partial Gravity and

journey to engineer, build, test, and eventually launch

University of Queensland, Australia embarked on a

Shortly thereafter, the UW team, along with students

'The University of Washington responded to this

proposal by the Mars Society to build a small research

The Translife Mars Gravity Biosatellite began with a

Martian gravity in our experiment, our satellite will spin, using

Biosatellite will attempt to answer. In order to simulate

gravity could be implemented in order to prevent the

micestronauts—and comparing the results with a earth-bound

hope to determine what effects (if any)

on future generations of mice, the offspring of the returned

the mission. These will be the first mammalian births in space.

a duration of approximately seven weeks. Some of the mice

who will live in specially-engineered cages for

"Mice In Space"

•

•

•

Figure 1

Figure 3

Jason Hoogland, UQ;

The following images used on this poster were taken from the UW fileshare and the Mars Gravity fileshare. Individual credits for

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- 24-point
- Caps: 24-point
- Captions: 24-point
- Figures: 24-point
- Headings: 40-point
- Headings/Section Titles: 40-point
- Title: 72-point
- Body Text: 28-point
- Fonts
- Footnotes
- Figures
- Grids
- Source
- Text
Fonts

Less is more. Limit yourself to 2-3 types of fonts in order to create consistency and unity.

- Sans-serif (e.g., Arial, Futura Geneva) for titles, headings, graphics
- Serif (e.g., Times New Roman, Garmond, Palatino) for text

Images

- Poster content should be 60 percent images, 40 percent text.
- A picture is worth a 1,000 words. Use graphs, charts, tables and photos to summarize and present data.
- Don’t crowd. White space—like what you see around these words—makes a poster easier to read.

- High resolution images (200 dpi or higher) are a must when printing large posters.
- Color mode for printing is CMYK.
- Think about contrast
Acknowledgements and references

- Remember to include your name and affiliations.
- List names of mentors and/or collaborators.
- Include citations and references to outside sources if appropriate
  - In-text citation
  - Separate "references" section

Poster review

In your group, review the sample poster and look for the following:
- key strengths
- areas of improvement
Printing Your Poster

- Odegaard Undergraduate Library
  - 2nd Floor Printing Station => about $17 ($0.50/linear inch)
- Communications
  - Basement Copy Center => about $27 ($34 without a UW budget number)
- Health Sciences Photographic & Digital Imaging (uwposters.com)
  - ($30-$50)
  - Tip: Request a contract proof because $7 can save you a big headache. Contract proofs are guaranteed!
- MGH CRC
  - (~$1 setup plus $0.50 per inch)
- Kinko's
  - ($70-$100+ tax)

Another thing to consider: paper weight. Economy bond won’t stand up to heavier inks. Go for matte or semi-gloss.

Mounting Your Poster

- You can get foam board from the UW Book Store.
- If possible, do not permanently affix your poster to the foam board—use binder clips.
- Health Sciences will mount the poster for you, but at an extra cost: ~$37

Tips for Presenting Well

- Prepare a two- to five-minute summary for visitors using your poster as a visual guide.
- Stay close by, but off to the side just a bit, so that passers-by can see your poster and you don’t block the view of people already gathered ‘round.
- Don’t become so engrossed in conversation with any single individual that you (or they) accidentally prevent others from viewing your poster.
Final Thoughts

A good poster can’t make up for bad research but a bad poster can make good research hard to recognize!

Additional Resources

- Microsoft PowerPoint (Open Office Impress)
  http://faculty.washington.edu/robinet/poster.html
- PowerPoint (Open Office Impress)
  http://www.cse.ucsc.edu/help/poster-powerpoint.txt
- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe Illustrator
  http://www.science.smith.edu/resources/poster_printing/docs/AI_quickRef.pdf
- LaTeX
  http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle/

References

- Undergraduate Research Program
  http://www.washington.edu/research/urp/urgp/posterparticipants.html
- Washington NASA Space Grant Consortium
  http://www.waspacegrant.org/posterdesign.html
- Communicating your Research & Results through a Poster
  http://www.nasduke.edu/trinity/research/xt/posters.html
- Irina Svete, WSGC Public Information Specialist
  isvete@u.washington.edu