

Research Posters: Things to Consider

Content & Context

Make sure you have a message, medium, and materiality in mind when creating your research poster. This will provide the reader context within your content.

Message:

- Who is your audience?
- What are you trying to communicate to them?
- What is the main idea or most important message that you want to convey with your research poster?
- What should the takeaway be?

Medium:

- Where are you presenting this information?
- What delivery method will you be using to share your work?

Materiality:

- What is the importance of this information?
- Why is your research topic relevant to your audience or field of study?
- How is it applicable beyond these contexts?

Formatting Considerations

How you display your information can be just as important as the content in the poster. It is important to keep dimensions and layout in mind when designing your research poster.

Dimensions: Traditional research posters have the dimensions of 48" x 36", and can be positioned either horizontally or vertically. A tri-fold poster can also be an option which are commonly 48" x 36" or 40" x 20".

Layout: For a traditional poster, it must be hung or held the entire time. Whereas a tri-fold poster has the ability to stand on a surface. It also has 3 sections to organize the work into sections.

Ordering Information

When organizing your content on a research poster, it is important to visually prioritize the most relevant material through strategic placement. Ask yourself: what information is the most significant for communicating the main message of this research? Once you have identified the most important content, think about your audience and how they will access your information.

Size: For visual compositions, size is an effective tool for gaining the audience's attention; writers should consider the size of headings, body text, and images.

Color: If used correctly, color can significantly aid reader's understanding and engagement with a research poster. Bold, contrasting colors call out for attention. Not to mention, color can be leveraged for branding purposes as well.

Font: Assigning distinct roles to font combinations also aids the way information is ordered. Using a consistent combination of serif and sans-serif fonts for headings and body text, for example, helps readers differentiate between information at a quick glance. When selecting a specific font style for headings, ensure that you utilize the same font size, color, and style to establish the visual ordering of information.

Alignment: Alignment refers to the positioning of objects (i.e., text, shapes, images, etc.) within a space; having misaligned information on a research poster will hinder the audience's ability to process the content of the poster.

Whitespace: Whitespace, also known as blank space or negative space, is another tool writers and designers can use to create visual hierarchy. Careful composition takes into account the space around and between objects (i.e., text, shapes, images, etc.) to call attention to specific information. One common mistake with research posters is not leaving enough whitespace for readers by presenting large walls of text.

Images: Images can be used to enhance the textual content of a research poster. When selecting images, it is important to ensure that they are of a high-quality resolution and that they depict content relevant to your research. Providing captions for your images allow you to contextualize the relevance of this visual content as it relates to your research. When utilizing maps, charts, or graphs, be sure to create labels to describe the data you are presenting. *Take note of the citation style that you're using.*