

Preparing a Poster Exhibit

When, Why & How to Use Posters

Poster exhibits are a popular way to present information about research projects, the results achieved to date, conclusions, and future plans. One of the things that make posters popular is the high level of conversation and personal interaction that authors and viewers can share. Also, posters are permanent and can be displayed without the author being present. People who experience stage fright find posters to be a comfortable compromise. With the constant flow of words and images surrounding us, exhibits offer a unique opportunity; a chance to create models of the real world, using objects from both our past and our present. They counter-balance our word-centered education and provide a sense of the meaning behind those words. A poster exhibit is an effective way to present a message, providing the opportunity to use large photos and illustrations and to use large type in the text and labels. Exhibits can be simple poster sessions displayed on backdrops or elaborate trade show type exhibits covering many square feet. They can include artifacts, computers, and videos. They can be designed to involve the audience in a three-dimensional multimedia experience. The typical poster exhibit is an opportunity to visually display research and to illustrate investigations and findings. Projects are generally placed around the perimeter of the display area, and guests come and go as their schedules permit. Exhibitors stand by their work and are prepared to discuss their research with guests from all diverse backgrounds.

Tips for Preparing a Poster Exhibit

MATERIALS

- heavy cover stock or 3/8" foam board as backdrop material
- an "x-acto" knife or similar sharp cutting tool
- spray adhesive
- 1/2"-1" wide strips of backing hook velcro tape for fastening

GUIDELINES

A good poster will do three things:

1. Draw attention to itself
2. Present information concisely, yet clearly and completely
3. Encourage questions and interchange with the author

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



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SUGGESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Use color liberally in titles, text, graphs, and photos
- Mount the individual pages and photo plates on colored poster board panels that complement other colors in the poster but do not compete with them for attention
- Number the panels and arrange them to read left to right rather than down and up
- Use the same title/author format as for the one-page abstract that you submit
- Write a one-paragraph abstract to follow the title/author information
- Write a one-half to one-page introduction, use at least a 14 point font
- Choose graphs and photographs rather than tables or text whenever possible
- Write a one-sentence legend for each graph, photograph, or table
- Limit text to less than 15 lines per page
- Avoid abbreviations, acronyms, and jargon
- Use upper and lower case type in 14 point font size (all upper case is hard to read)

CONTENT

1. Identify your audience
2. Identify types or categories of information (What is it you need to tell?)
Conceptual; Background science; Procedures; Results; Conclusions; Other
3. Break information down into chunks or bite-sized pieces
4. Rank the importance of the chunks (you may not be able to fit it all)
5. Sequence the chunks (What does the audience need to know first, second, third,....?)
6. What graphics will support your data without distracting or causing confusion?
7. Introduction/Abstract/Technical Summary (Explain the objectives or hypothesis. What is your purpose?)
8. Experiment/Research (What did you do, how did you do it, and what materials did you use? What tasks did you perform? What science does the audience need to be told in order to follow the narrative of your experiment or research?)
9. Conclusion (What happened? State your results and put them into context. Are the results surprising or controversial? What future directions of inquiry do they suggest? Are the results important? Do they have implications or are they useful to anyone? Has humanity benefited? Have you benefited?)

APPEARANCE

1. Posters are graphic presentations. Each sheet should convey an idea or chunk of information, like a paragraph. Stick to one subject per sheet.
2. Bullets, like those on this page (numeric and non-numeric) help the viewer digest information. Limit to 5-7 bullet points per sheet. Keep each bullet to just a few sentences focused on one point.
3. Graphics look good, but be certain they are directly related to the text and fully explained. Captions help.
4. Layout: Avoid perfect symmetry when laying out. Top left is the strongest position. White space is CRITICAL (no crowding). Consider how the viewer will have to move eye/head/body to follow your poster. Where do you want the viewer to end up?
5. Effective displays are as visual as possible. Use colored or textured paper and mats, different lettering styles, photographs, and graphs where appropriate. Design the presentation for the viewer with a general technical background. Although it is not necessary to be too "artsy", the effectiveness of your presentation will be enhanced by mounting the sheets on colored construction paper and/or using other techniques to improve the graphic impact. Simplicity, ease of reading, etc., are more important than artistic flair. Certain color combinations, for instance, may look beautiful, but be almost impossible to read - especially in the absence of optimum lighting.

6. Illustrative material will have to be read by viewers from a distance of 3' or more, so lettering on illustrations should be at least 3/8" high.
7. There should be a logical sequence (introduction, development and conclusion) to your display.

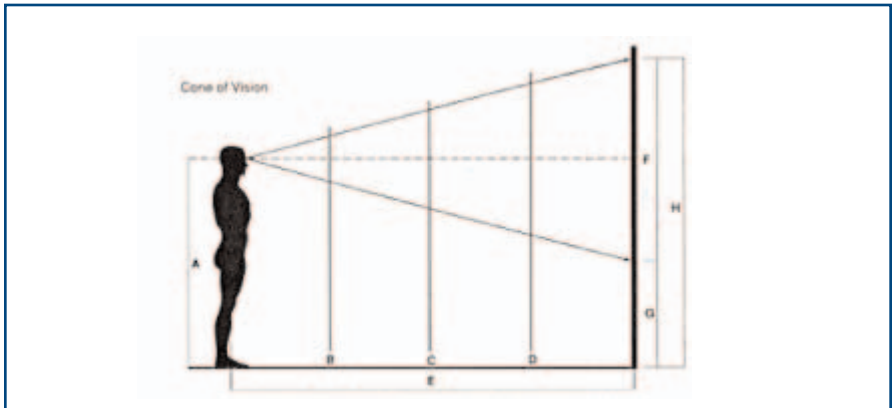
PARAMETERS

As you begin to design your exhibit, keep the following in mind:

1. Size of display panels (table display panels available for the Forum will be 36"H x 23"W with 9"H x 23"W header panels) You may request up to 6 connected display panels.
2. Cone of Vision (see diagram below)
3. Size of print (as a rule of thumb, minimum height of letters should be 1" for 35 feet of viewing distance: see table below for typical type sizes)

DIMENSIONS

- A. 5 feet 3 inches
- B. 2 feet 6 inches
- C. 5 feet 0 inches
- D. 7 feet 6 inches
- E. 10 feet 0 inches
- F. 5 feet 3 inches
- G. 2 feet 7 1/2 inches
- H. 7 feet 10 1/2 inches



TYPICAL TYPE SIZES FOR EXHIBITS

- Logo headers: 5 1/2 inches (reverse type is very effective on headers)
- First headline - main panel: 120 point
- Second headline or large bullet items: 72 point
- Smaller bullet items: 48-60 point
- Text blocks: 30-36 point
- Captions: 18-24 point

CONSTRUCTION

1. Graphically lay out your design on paper showing where all pieces will go.
2. Prepare you display pieces
 - Use a computer or engage someone with calligraphy skills and tools
 - Be neat
3. Glue display pieces on the backboards (foam board or heavy poster board) using Rubber Cement as opposed to white glue which can "bleed"
4. Trim the backboards carefully (clean cuts with the x-acto blade)
5. Fasten two short strips of velcro to the backs of the backboard