

# A Guide To Posters: Design And Presentation

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## Do's and Don'ts of Poster Design

1. Follow conference guidelines for dimensions and materials
2. Choose an overall layout that suggests an arrangement of communication areas. Some options are:
  - left-to-right flow of information in vertical columns
  - two fields in contrast
  - left-to-right flow in horizontal rows
  - a centered image surrounded by text, tables and figures
3. Leave sufficient white space
4. Label figures and tables clearly
5. Use large typeface. The following point sizes are recommended:

**96 point title**

**24-36 point for subtitles**

**Minimum 18 point for text.**

6. Don't use more than two fonts throughout. Also, don't mix serif and sans serif fonts:

**Times New Roman      Arial**

7. Be creative, but don't overdo the formatting to the extent that it obscures the information.

8. **DO NOT WRITE ALL IN CAPITALS. IT IS IRRITATING.**

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# What to Include on a Poster

A poster is not a paper. It's difficult to read a lot of material when you are standing in front of it. Therefore, the poster must focus on the critical points. Do not overwhelm the viewer with data.

## 1. Title

- as brief as it can be
- to the point
- include authors and affiliations

## 2. Abstract

- as printed in the conference book of abstracts

## 3. Introduction

- background information
- rationale for study based on the literature
- the question[s] asked

## 4. Methods

- can be noted in the Results section unless they are unusual or the main point of the poster.

## 5. Results

- the body of the poster
- in quantitative research, commonly presented as a series of tables and/or figures
  - legends briefly summarize the result or the point of the figure
  - the methods used should be noted briefly, noting critical elements
  - a maximum of 2-3 sentences per figure
- in qualitative research, commonly presented as descriptions of themes

## 6. Discussion

- a separate section is generally not needed unless research is qualitative

## 7. Conclusion[s]/Recommendations

- a brief list answering the question[s] asked in the Introduction
- discussion if required, especially in qualitative research

## 8. References

## 9. Conflict of Interest

- if there is a real or perceived conflict, this should be displayed on the poster

## 10. Acknowledgements

- supervisors
- sources of funding and/or materials

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## Some Style Variations You Can Use

Variation 1:

**This study seeks to determine whether Eph receptors play a role in dorsoventral patterning of motor neurons. I am examining whether loss of EphB2, B3 and A4, or combinations of these receptors alters the somatotopic pattern of limb innervation by lumbar motor neurons**

Variation 2:

**This study:**

- **seeks to determine whether Eph receptors play a role in dorsoventral patterning of motor neurons, and**
- **examines whether loss of EphB2, B3 and A4, or combinations of these receptors alters the somatotopic pattern of limb innervation by lumbar motor neurons**

Variation 3:

**What does this study determine?**

- **Do Eph receptors play a role in dorsoventral patterning of motor neurons?**
- **Does loss of EphB2, B3 and A4, or combinations of these receptors alter the somatotopic pattern of limb innervation by lumbar motor neurons?**

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## Principles of Reduction in Figure Captions (How to Save Words)

Types of compressed language:

1. noun compounds: These are created by removing prepositional and verb elements to achieve compression. The meaning of uncompressed language “unpacks” as the reader moves from left to right. However, noun compounds unpack from the right:

**The utilization of DNA microarrays as a predictor of gene response in clinical trials**

**DNA microarray utilization as a clinical trial gene response predictor**

2. gapping (deleting elements to achieve smoothness and conciseness):

**In 1943, streptomycin was found to be effective against TB**

**1943: streptomycin found effective against TB**

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## Presenting Your Poster

- Arrive early and always be near your poster
- Be ready to expand on the poster contents
- NETWORKING: Be ready to exchange contact information with interested viewers
- Be ready to respond to both praise and criticism graciously:

**"This really is an outstanding poster; I'm really impressed. How do I quote you?"**

**"I know you don't get much space for your poster, but my impression is that the data look pretty thin."**

**"Haven't you read \_\_\_\_\_'s latest paper in \_\_\_\_\_?"**

**"I don't see any references to the work of our research group."**

(this list reproduced from Swales, J.M., & Feak, C.B., 2000, *English in today's research world: A writing guide*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, p.107)

As the day progresses, your audience constantly changes. Some viewers are only mildly interested; others (such as research supervisors and industry professionals) want to learn all about your research. You should prepare several versions of your remarks, from 30 seconds to 5 minutes.

Whatever the length of your presentation, here are some tips:

- Don't talk to the poster. Face the audience and turn to the poster only to point to some specific item you want them to focus on. Then turn back to them.
- Use verbal cues to direct their focus (e.g., "If you look at the results of our second experiment [point at figure], you'll notice that...").
- Look around at your audience and make eye contact. Don't stare ahead of you, at the floor, or at your poster.
- Speak clearly and slowly – the acoustics in poster rooms are rarely favourable.