Effective Poster Design
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Poster Design Considerations:
1. Is everything in the design considered – are any design elements happening by accident?
   a. How you are saying what you are trying to say is as important as what you are saying
   b. Every design element on your poster is communicating a message – make sure it’s communicating the message you want

Poster Elements to Consider:
• What is my purpose? … some combination of:
  o Present results
  o Get feedback
  o Teach
  o Learn
  o Communicate verbally and visually
  o Grab and engage attention
• Who is my audience? … some combination of:
  o Experts
  o Academics
  o General public
• What content do I want to get across?
  o More than an abstract … but,
  o Less than a full paper
• What is the most effective way of communicating that content?
  ▪ You have 3 seconds to stimulate interest and get audience to read further
  ▪ You have 30 seconds to convey overall concept
  ▪ You have 2-5 minutes to provide full story
  o How do you do this?
    ▪ Using concise (but complete) sentences (Who/What/Where/When/Why with elaboration only as absolutely necessary)
    ▪ Using active voice (when the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed by the verb)
    ▪ Using short paragraphs (1-3 sentences)
    ▪ Keeping attention-getting details and leaving out extraneous information (this is achieved by conversation and/or reprints)
    ▪ Using a narrative to tell your story, but highlighting where possible with bullets, diagrams, and/or text boxes
      • Text explains
        o Problem and hypothesis
        o Objectives and methods
        o Results
        o Conclusions
        o Sources and acknowledgements
      • Visuals (images, graphs, tables, etc)
        o Illustrate samples, subjects, equipment, phenomena
        o Convey data and results
        o Spark interest
    ▪ The poster design also speaks (whether you know it or not) … make sure it complements/enhances your story

Design Elements to Consider:
• Poster will be viewed from a distance as well as read up close
• Fonts
  o Use Sans Serif Fonts for Titles and Headings (Arial, Calibri, Helvetica)
  o Use Serif Fonts for Text and Captions (Georgia, Baskerville, Times New Roman)
Avoid Ornamental or Casual Fonts or WordArt (Brush Script, Lucida; or for the love of all you hold dear, Comic Sans)

Use Color carefully (ie. with careful consideration)
  - Consider the emotional impact of colors and color combinations
    - Cool colors = calm, perhaps impersonal; appear smaller, recede
    - Warm colors = exciting, even agitating; optimistic; perhaps angry; appear larger, can overpower
    - It can be particularly effective to balance warm with cool colors or to use hues that have both warm and cool attributes (purple, green)
    - Neutral colors (grey, brown) will tone-down and/or shift focus to other colors
  - Dark Colors on Light Backgrounds or Light Colors on Dark Backgrounds = good
  - Dark Colors on Dark Backgrounds or Light Colors on Light Backgrounds = bad
  - Bright colors with Little Contrast = bad

Font Size guidelines
  - Title ~ 100 points
  - Heading ~ 50 points
  - Body ~ 25 points

If using background graphic, make it subtle

A General Template

**TITLE OF POSTER**
Presenter’s Name and Affiliation

**SECTION HEADER**
Viewers will read from left to right and from top to bottom. Lay out text in newspaper column style.

**SECTION HEADER**
Most important info is above the midline and closest to the center.

**SECTION HEADER**
Image here that grabs attention … along with caption or explanation

**SECTION HEADER**
Chart or Table showing results

**SECTION HEADER**

**SOURCES**

Other Considerations
  - Poster will be read left to right & top to bottom
  - 3 or 5 columns usually works best
  - Try to balance the visual elements
  - Start with a pencil on paper sketch of layout rather than just jumping into a computer application
  - You’ll be working on the poster zoomed out substantially, but to really judge effects and resolution, you should be viewing at 100% (Actual Size)
  - Make sure you keep all poster content in a common folder. Then if you need to move the InDesign document to another computer, move the entire folder. In that way, content (esp. placed images) will remain linked to the document. For this reason (among others) it is best to always print from a PDF version of the document (see section on Printing below).

**Poster Design Considerations … parting thought:**
  - All of that said; RULES ARE MEANT TO BE BROKEN … just make sure they are broken with intent