

Doug's Big Poster Guidelines

- The main thing (prime directive): Focus on what's **most** important and build your poster around it. *Posters are an excellent means of communicating ideas or results quickly!* If your poster is about ideas, educate us. If your poster makes a case, persuade us. If your poster is about research, show us your findings. *Don't focus your poster on your methods (unless your prof has told you to).*
- Give yourself enough time to complete your poster and get it printed. *(It takes a number of hours to create a good poster and proof it for possible mistakes and misspellings.)*
- Posters are not the same as papers. They're more like billboards. They rely more on graphics and images than on text to carry their message. From far away, someone should be able to get the gist of your poster, perhaps from the title. Every step closer should bring more detail (e.g., first section headings, then charts and images, then body text, then references and data sources, etc.)
- **Posters should be good-looking** enough to attract attention, **and clear** enough to communicate your ideas or research results.
- Do not overcrowd your poster with too much text, too many colors, or a background color or image. Use simplicity and clean design (think Apple Store design) to get your message across. *Too much text is the number one reason people don't read posters!*
- Produce clearly defined sections. Common sections include: Title, Abstract, Introduction, Authors, Materials and Methods, Results (present numerical data graphically, if appropriate), Discussion, Conclusions, References. *Which of these sections can you leave out (remember the prime directive)?*
- Make things obvious. Posters are *not* like mystery novels. You shouldn't have to read to the end to find out whodunit (or what, where, when or why). *Most of the text on your poster should augment (fill in, bolster) your title, section headings and graphic elements.*
- Work on your graphics outside of PowerPoint to make them as good as you can (readable at the appropriate size, not pixelated), and as small as possible (in computer storage terms).
- Choose appropriate fonts and font sizes for the different parts of your poster: Put the title in a Sans Serif font (at about 72 -150 point size), and put the main text areas in a Serif font (at about 24 - 48 point size). **Use no more than two different fonts in your poster.** (You can use different sizes as needed.)
- Choose colors very carefully:
 - Font color and poster background color must have high contrast
 - Be wary of colors that do not mix well, red and blue, for instance.
 - Be aware of low-contrast combinations that make text hard/impossible to read.
 - Don't let the background distract the audience from your message.
- Arrange your poster for "flow", typically from upper left to lower right, to guide the reader.
- Use alignment consistently to justify your text and your sections. *Align all the sections of your poster to each other.*
- Check all your spelling and punctuation.

Consider:

- *What are your goals? What do you want your audience to remember from reading your poster?*
- *Who is your audience? Who are you making this poster for?*

Four Principles to guide your postermaking (Credit: Simon Fraser University School of Computer Science)

From: *The Non-Designer's Design Book* by Robin Williams

Proximity

Group related items together

- The basic purpose:
 - organize
 - if information is organized it is more likely to be read and more likely to be remembered
 - easier to use
- How to get it:
 - Squint your eyes and count the number of visual elements on the page by counting the number of times your eye stops.
 - If there are more than 3- 5 then try to regroup some of the elements

Alignment

Nothing should be placed on the page arbitrarily

- The basic purpose:
 - unify and organize the page
- How to get it:
 - Be conscious of where you place elements
 - always find something else on the page to align with, even if the two objects are physically far apart
- What to avoid:
 - Avoid using more than one text alignment (like I did above)
 - Center-aligned text – it's hard to read from line to line

Contrast

If two items are not the same then make them REALLY different

- The basic purpose:
 - create an interest on the page -- more likely to be read
 - organization of information
- How to get it:
 - add contrast through typeface choices, line thickness, colors, shapes, sizes, space, etc.
 - most important thing is to be distinctive
- What to avoid:
 - differences which are too subtle

Simplicity

"Do the most with the least"

- The basic purpose:
 - include only those elements that are essential for communication
 - be as unobtrusive as possible
- Clarity
 - design all components so their meaning is not ambiguous
- Distinctiveness
 - distinguish important properties of essential elements
- Emphasis
 - make the most important elements salient (easily perceived)
 - de-emphasize non-critical elements
 - minimize clutter