Designing and Creating an Academic Poster using PowerPoint

About your poster and the presentation

- Poster presentations are used at professional conferences to communicate information about your project visually.
- Posters are meant to be easy to read and the content on the poster should make sense for someone reading through the poster without an explanation.
- Poster presentations generate conversation and these conversations can lead to advances in your research and ideas for future projects.
- You should have a rehearsed spiel for your presentation. It should take you between 3 and 5 minutes to explain your entire poster from start to finish. After you have explained your poster, then you can open the floor for questions, comments, and concerns.
- During poster sessions, audience members walk around to different posters and stop in front of the ones they want to listen to. If someone stops in front of your poster, then introduce yourself and begin your spiel. You can ask “would you like to learn more about my research/project?” or you can immediately start talking about your research.
- When speaking with an audience member, gauge the volume of the room. At larger conferences you will have to speak loudly, but in more intimate settings that is not necessary. If you tend to speak quietly, then work on projecting your voice before your presentation.

Planning and outlining

The most important part of creating a professional poster is outlining. Always outline before you open PowerPoint.

- Your poster should have 4-6 sections. Abstract (optional, not usually recommended), Introduction or Background, Method, Results, Discussion or Conclusion.
  - If you are putting an abstract on your poster, then you should use the same abstract that you submitted to the conference. Be sure to left justify the text.
  - Your introduction or background section should cover basic information that your audience should know to understand the rest of your poster. Things to include in your introduction might include relevant definitions, history, theories, people, your hypothesis, or your research question.
  - The method section should cover what type of research/project you did, what you did, and how you did it. If you’re presenting social science research, you can include descriptive statistics here. Include any measurement tools, any specific machinery used, tests ran, interview techniques, internet search tools, reflection methods, etc. Use whatever you need to help your reader understand what you did.
  - The results or findings section is simply that – what did you find? Can you communicate this information in a graph or chart? Do it!
  - The discussion or conclusion section is a synopsis of what you found, what you think that means, how it is applicable to the world or to your specific discipline, limitations of your study or project, and future directions (what you’ll do next time)
When outlining your poster, figure out what information you are going to put in each section. How will you communicate that information? What is some information that you do not need to include on your poster?

Formatting tips to know before you begin

Colors

- Your poster should have a light or white background with black or dark text. Posters with dark backgrounds and light text are almost impossible to read.
- Try to keep a consistent color scheme throughout your poster. For help with colors that work well together, use the Adobe Color tool. Try not to use more than 3-5 colors on your poster.
  - When using Adobe Color, you will learn the exact RBG (red, blue, green) codes for the colors. Use the RBG to create the same colors in PowerPoint.
- Avoid bright colors like red, yellow, lime green, etc., as they tend to be difficult to see when printed and are harsh on the eyes.
- To show school spirit, use your school colors for the color scheme on your poster. To find your exact school colors, use the Explore option in Adobe Color and search your school name.

Font/text

- The best font to use on any printed document is serif (e.g., Times New Roman, Garamond) and the best font to use on any projected document is sans serif (e.g., Arial, Calibri). Because posters are printed, we recommend using serif fonts.
- Avoid using ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, bold, italics, and underlining unless necessary. **Fonts like this are difficult to read.**
- Font sizing:
  - Title: 84-112 pt.
  - Authors: 64-84 pt.
  - Headings: 54-72 pt.
  - Subheadings: 36-48 pt.
  - Body text: No smaller than 24 pt. unless citation or caption for image

Balance

- Because posters are a visual representation of your project, you should use a lot of visual elements besides text
- Try to use 50% images and 50% text on your poster
- The left and right sides of your poster should have relatively equal amounts of text and images; make sure one side of your poster isn’t overwhelmingly text heavy while the other is overwhelmingly image heavy

Graphics

- The best images to use on a poster are self-created graphs and charts.
• If you are using a chart or graph, do not copy and paste from Excel or any other file. Recreate the graph or chart in PowerPoint so that you can edit the size and data points easily.
• If using images from the web, try to find high quality (e.g., 150 dpi), large images.
• To see how each picture will look when printed, select the image on the poster and zoom into 100%. If the image is blurry or pixelated, then you should find a different image.
• Images are used to replace text

Creating your poster
1. Open PowerPoint and immediately resize your slide. (Your poster will be made on one slide.) Be sure to size your slide to the required inches that your conference recommends.
2. Create a space for your heading. Use the first few inches of your poster (about 5-6” for 36”x48” poster) to indicate the title, authors, and university affiliation.

• To create a simpler title space, use the Insert Shape feature and draw a line that spans the length of your poster.
• To create a bolder look using a color block, use the Insert Shape feature and draw a rectangle that spans the length of your poster with the appropriate height. Select your border color and your fill color.
• You can also create a heading space background from an image on the internet. Simply find the image you want to use, paste the image in PowerPoint and crop the image to fit your heading space.
3. Decide if you are doing a 3 or 4 column poster.

- If you are doing a 3-column poster, then take the suggested width of the poster (e.g., 48”) and divide it by 4 (e.g., 48”/4 = 12”). Since you are doing 3 columns instead of 4, you will have two 12” sections (each side) and one 24” section (middle).
  - Using the View tab, turn on the Ruler function.
  - Create lines to help block your columns. Your first line should be 12 inches from the left, and your second line should be 12 inches from the right.
  - **Delete these lines before you print your poster! They are only there to keep your columns even!**

- If you are doing a 4-column poster, then take the suggested width of the poster (e.g., 48”) and divide it by 4 (e.g., 48”/4 = 12”). Since you are doing 4 columns, you will have four 12” sections.
  - Using the View tab, turn on the Ruler function.
  - Create lines to help block your columns. Your first line should be 12 inches from the left, your second line should be at the 0 measure (or right in the middle), and your third line should be 12 inches from the right.
  - **Delete these lines before you print your poster! They are only there to keep your columns even!**

4. Using the font and size tips listed above, create headings and subheadings in each of your column. To do this, simply insert a text box and modify the text inside. To save time, once you have formatted one text box to the right size and font, then you can copy and paste to where you need it then simply change the text.

5. Begin filling in your text (in bullet point format) and your images into each column. For graphics, use the SmartArt and Chart functions in PowerPoint.
6. Once you have all content in the poster, you should begin the clean-up phase.

- Are your text boxes the same width size in each column? If not, then make them all the same size. Find the size that you like, then select all text boxes in that column. Using the Drawing Tools Format function, change the width to the size that you prefer. This will resize all text boxes selected and will make your text look cleaner.

- Are the text boxes and images in your column aligned?

**Discussion**
The Office of Undergraduate Research provides services and support to all undergraduates, all majors, and all departments. We specialize in creating opportunities for undergraduates to work one-on-one with faculty members at UNF.

**Future Directions**
The Office of Undergraduate Research provides services and support to all undergraduates, all majors, and all departments. We specialize in creating opportunities for undergraduates to conduct research, publishing research, presenting at professional conferences, and more.

**Limitations**
If you use a lot of paragraphs in your poster, a lot of people will not read it. They don’t have the time or attention span. Present it to them! That’s what you’re there for. Don’t rely on your poster. You know your study.

**Introduction**
**Topic 1**
The Office of Undergraduate Research provides services and support to all undergraduates, all majors, and all departments. We specialize in creating opportunities for undergraduates to work one-on-one with faculty members at UNF, conducting research, publishing research, presenting at professional conferences, and more.

**Topic 2**
The Office of Undergraduate Research provides services and support to all undergraduates, all majors, and all departments.

**Hypothesis**
If you are going to use paragraphs like this, for the love of all that is holy, PLEASE align your text boxes! Your readers will be SO HAPPY that you did. Also, USE TIMES NEW ROMAN.
7. Take a break from your poster for a day or two. Have someone else review or read over it, then make any final edits before printing.

8. Submit your poster for printing. If you are printing through the Office of Undergraduate Research, then you should visit the poster printing webpage and read everything carefully before submitting for printing.