

## Shasta McGee's Hints for a Good Poster (NMT, 4/07)

### Why do a poster?

- Lots of personal contacts, more personal interaction with people than you get with an oral presentation. Commonly brings up research ideas you hadn't considered or answers problems you had been stuck on.
- Most work is done by the time you get to the conference so no need to be nervous.

### Before Making the Poster

- Read all the instructions and guidelines listed for your particular conference – some require your booth number on the poster, some require certain formats for the author information. Most importantly, check the requirements for poster dimensions.
- Outline your research in a logical fashion (usually this follows Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion)

### Technology for Posters

- PowerPoint works with some new plotters although Adobe Illustrator is compatible with almost all plotters.
- PowerPoint: Avoid adding borders to figures because the figure will disappear when it is printed.
- No matter what software you use to create the poster, pre-print a smaller version on the same plotter you use to print the final copy. This is usually free upon request and it lets you check to see if your figures will be printed correctly.

### Creating the Poster

- **Do not procrastinate!** This especially applies to printing out the final version. Lines are commonly long for printing posters at the last minute.
- Print a draft copy and hang it up on the wall and make sure that you can read everything and see what catches your eye first.
- Use symbols and colors to designate different sets of data for the colorblind.
- Use some kind of designation to guide the readers through your poster while you are not present (I,II,III or A, B, C or Intro, Methods, Results).
- **Make the print large enough to read** from at least 2 meters/6 feet away (in general, minimum is 24 point for text and 36 point for headers).
- Fonts: Times is recommended for the main text, Arial or Helvetica is recommended for the headers and figure labels. Avoid shadow, cursive, etc.
- Have good, easy-to-read figures with captions – this is often what people look at first (or the only thing they look at).
- Include your abstract (sometimes mandatory for science conferences) but this can be in smaller font.
- When designing the poster, think **FEWER WORDS!** If you need to reduce, cut words. Complete sentences not necessary.
- Use at least some color. Photographs, background color, colored text, or diagrams.
- Make sure to include any appropriate affiliations (usually as logos at the top). Include your current school, your previous school (if that's where you did the research), the conference logo & date, and most importantly, your **FUNDING SOURCES**.
- Have contact information listed on the poster (email and snail mail addresses)
- Include the references in the form of the conference you are attending.

## **Presenting the Poster**

- Prepare a short (2-3) minute talk that answers the question: “What’s your poster about?” Prepare for a general audience and someone in your field.
- Prepare for questions. Have other people ask you questions before you get there and research the answers. Think of subjects that are related, topics you didn’t have room to include, and areas that you believe may be confusing and practice these areas.
- Have a pen & paper handy to write down notes or take people’s information.
- Have a sign that indicates when you will be in front of your poster and follow through on that time.
- Wear “nice” clothes – the formality varies depending on the conference, but people are more likely to talk to you if you look professional. Consider temperature: Sometimes poster rooms are hot or cold so dressing in layers is often a good idea.
- Bring water or a beverage (and lozenges) since you may be talking for 2 hours straight.
- Smile and be friendly.

## **Optional:**

- 11x15 handouts of your poster.
- Papers that you based your work on.
- Look at other posters at the conference to see what you find to be effective and employ that technique next time.

## **Fonts:**

Times New Roman font would look like this on your poster.

Arial font would look like this on your poster.

10 point font

14 point font

20 point font

24 point font (for main text)

28 point font

36 point font (for headings)

48 point font

72 point font