TIPS ON POSTER PRESENTATIONS

PURPOSES

• To educate others about your research findings;
• To get feedback/critique from peers before submitting a manuscript for publication;
• To network with other scholars who are interested in the same research; and/or
• To promote one’s work and one’s self prior to applying to graduate school or going on the job market.

ADVANTAGES OF POSTER PRESENTATIONS OVER ORAL PRESENTATIONS

• A poster session has potential to reach larger numbers of people than a typical oral presentation.
• An appealing poster can interest people who walk by who might not be in your specific field of research.
• A poster presentation allows you to interact one-on-one with people interested in your research.
• There is more time to present your research at a poster session; versus the 12-20 minutes allotted in most oral sessions.

ETHICAL & PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

• Do not list your name on a poster as a co-author/presenter unless you had an active role in the research and development of the content of the presentation.
• Give citations on a poster when paraphrasing other’s work just like you would in a manuscript.
• Use an appropriate style (e.g., APA) when citing.
• Be on time for your poster, and be sure to take your poster down at the end of the time.
• Stay close to your poster during the session so that you are available for discussion.
• Wear your nametag
• Smile and make eye contact with people who pass the poster.
• Greet viewers with “hello” and offer to answer any questions they may have.
• Allow the viewers time to read the poster without interruption.
• If they ask you a question or look like they have a question, then that is your cue to engage them about your research.
• Don’t get too involved with one person and ignore others who might want to discuss your research.
• Have a rough draft of the paper as a handout (e.g., hard copy, disc, electronic copy) for interested scholars.
• Don’t take criticism personally.
• One of the purposes of a poster (or oral) presentation is to get critique prior to submitting for publication.
• Staff and peers who attend the poster session may be offering constructive criticism as a way to help enhance your professional development.
• If you do not know the answer to a question, one option is to mirror the question back.
  o For example, if a person asks “Don’t you think the variable A could be related to B because of C?” You could respond with, “Hmm interesting. Please tell me a little more about your reasoning.”
• If a person offers a constructive critique, then take his/her advice into consideration. For example, if a person asks, “Have you thought about running blank analysis?” or “Maybe A is related to B because of E.” You could respond, “That is interesting. I had not thought of that. I will definitely consider that.”
• It is okay to admit you do not know something.
SECTIONS OF THE POSTER

• **Heading**
  - Title of the poster
  - Authors of the poster
  - Title, major/department, and institution of the authors

• **Introduction**
  - A poster should not be a research paper tacked on a board! It should be a concise, visually pleasing, illustration of your work.
  - Avoid visual clutter/chaos. Use a logical structure that guides the reader along the main points from beginning to end.
  - Remember, you are on display as well as your poster!

• **Poster Presentation Tips**
  - Justification/Rationale – Why did you do this study? Who could benefit from the results?
  - Invest time in explaining a compelling reason for the study rather than just showing past literature that found similar results.
  - Purpose – Exactly what did you do?
  - Null or alternative hypotheses – If you are making a predication, then you should present the alternative hypotheses. If there is no previous research or theory on the topic, then use null hypotheses. Note: If the study is exploratory, then you may want to provide research questions.

• **Methodology**
  - Sample characteristics
    - Sample size
    - Gender
    - Age range and mean (or median if the age is skewed)
    - Ethnicity
    - Any other characteristics that may be of interest to the study or viewer/reader.
  - Procedures – How were the data collected?
  - Variables and measurement – How were the variables operationally defined?
    - List variable, scale, number of items, response choices, and reliability (if applicable)

• **Results**
  - Analyses – briefly provide the rationale for the analyses conducted
  - Findings – provide the findings in easy-to-read table(s) or concise bullets

• **Discussion** – identify the most interesting findings and provide an explanation/rationale.
  - Why did this study get the results? Is it similar to past research? Can theory explain the findings? Is there something about this data collection that made the results different?

• **Implications**
  - Implications for practice – How can the findings help others (e.g., practitioners, educators, policy makers)?
  - Implications for research – Based on the results and/or limitations of this study, what should future studies in this area do?

• **Acknowledgments**
  - Briefly and succinctly acknowledge the following:
    - Individuals who assisted with the project/poster (e.g., statistical advice, critique of poster, fieldwork/lab help);
    - Funding sources; and/or Conflicts of interest.
• **FORMATTING**
  
  o **Wording**
    ▪ Use appropriate grammar and spelling.
    ▪ Use phrases instead of sentences as much as possible.
    ▪ Use active, not passive, verbs.
    ▪ Use bullets.
  
  o Avoid visual chaos that distracts the reader (e.g., numerous jagged edges, various-sized boxes and font sizes, gratuitous images).
  
  o Provide visual cues to guide readers through your poster.
  
  o Make it aesthetically pleasing (because it enhances a person’s desire to read it).
  
  o Use figures, diagrams, graphics, or easy-to-read tables to explain/illustrate ideas or findings.
    ▪ Note: Using graphics downloaded from the Internet will often look terrible when printed; especially if you make the image bigger.
    ▪ Make sure images you use are public domain. Just because it is on the internet does not make it public domain.
    ▪ Images should only be used when they complement/explain the subject matter.
  
  o Avoid background graphics that make the text difficult to read.
  
  o Use plenty of white space.
  
  o Maintain logical column alignments.
  
  o Colour - Colour is encouraged, but limit the number of colours to create an overall theme for the poster.
    ▪ Use a light-coloured background with black or dark-coloured text printed.
    ▪ Avoid dark backgrounds with white letters because it uses a tremendous amount of ink.
  
  o Use large enough print, graphs, charts, or designs to be read easily from a distance
  
  o **Fonts**
    ▪ Do not use ALL CAPS.
    ▪ Don’t mix a large number of fonts. Instead, make the headings/title a sans serif font (e.g., Arial, Helvetica) and the bodytext a serif font (e.g., Palatino, Times New Roman).
      ▪ Note: Serif fonts are easier to read, especially at smaller font sizes.
    ▪ Use common fonts (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri) because you may not know which fonts will be on the computer that is used to print your poster.
  
  o All type should be a **minimum** font size of 16 – preferably bigger.
    ▪ Font at the same level (e.g., heading, first level bullet) should be the same size and type throughout the poster.
  
  o Try to consolidate as much information as possible.
  
  o If separate analyses found similar results, then try to consolidate the results into a table or concise summary of results.

**ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES FOR POSTER PRESENTATIONS**

http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurrin1/posteradvice.htm

http://www.asp.org/Education/Howto_onPosters.html

http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/index.html