Faculty of Arts and Education
Higher Degree by Research

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
- 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 some.

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

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

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

• Acknowledgments
  o 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
Use large enough print, graphs, charts, or designs to be read easily from a distance.

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 body text 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.

All text 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.

Try to consolidate as much information as possible.
- 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

Colin Purrington
Creating Effective Poster Presentations | An Effective Poster

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