

## Designing a Poster

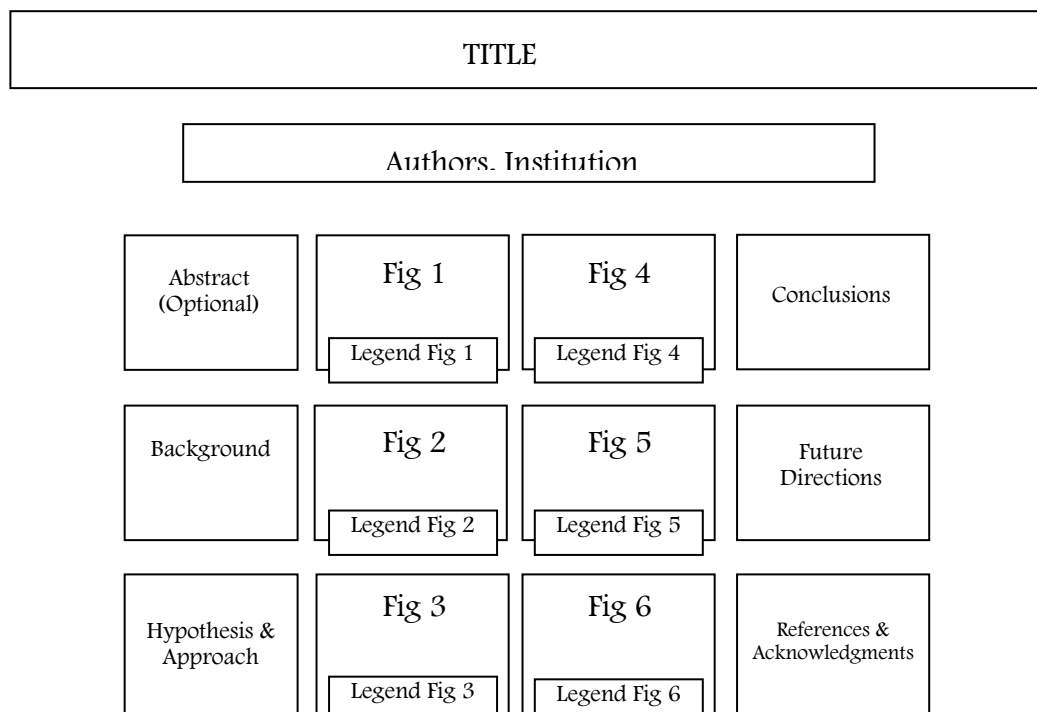
The goal of a scientific poster is to have an *organized* visual display of your research project and findings.

Posters should be *self-explanatory*. In addition you should be able to fully explain your poster from beginning to end in ten to fifteen minutes.

Posters should be *concise*. No long paragraphs. Use Bullets.

Posters are often judged on *scientific content, overall effectiveness, physical appearance, and student interaction/understanding*. For example, at URC's Science Poster Day, both attendees and Dean's prize judges will ask you about your poster. The judges will use these exchanges in scoring student interaction.

Below is a recommended layout option. Note how the poster is read from left to right. This layout allows many people to read your poster simultaneously:



Suggested poster dimensions: 42x42 or 42x48

## **Elements of the Poster:**

**Title:** At the top of your poster you should have a title that is *brief but descriptive*. It should be the same as the title provided on your abstract. For empirical studies, the title should mention the organism(s) studied in italics. The title should be easily readable at a distance of about 4-5 feet away. It should be written in “active tense” if possible. Suggested font size: 72pt or larger.

**Author(s) and Institution:** The first name should be the name of the poster presenter, after this the authors are listed in the order of contribution to the work. The last name should always be your faculty mentor (Principal Investigator)’s name or the faculty member whose grant funds the research. Below the list of authors, include the department that houses your laboratory and the university.

**Abstract:** Your abstract should be identical to that which you submitted for the conference. Including an abstract is optional as all attendees and judges will have an abstract book. If you have space, include it. If you do not have space, it is ok to leave it out.

**Background or Introduction:** Present any background necessary for the reader to understand your poster. Start with a general introduction to the field. Be brief, but include the important points to be sure the reader sees the relevance of your work. Bullet points are best, versus big paragraphs of text. Suggested font size: 20pt or larger.

**Hypothesis & Approach:** You should clearly state what you hypothesize based on the background information that you provided. You can include a model or diagram here to help explain the question you are interested in. State briefly your approach to answering your hypothesis. DO NOT go into details about methods. These belong in the figure legends ONLY.

**Figures:** Here you present data that you’ve collected in *support or denial* of your stated hypothesis/aims. Data is presented as a series of numbered figures. Make sure the Figure numbers are large (>20pt) so the reader can easily see the flow of the poster. Figures may be graphs, tables, photographs, illustrations, or diagrams. Avoid using yellow on graphs as it is hard to see.

If you have a methods oriented project or use an unusual technique, plan to explain these methods in your Figures. Otherwise, do not over explain methods. Sequencing methods, standard cloning techniques and common protocols should not be included in the figure.

All figures should have a **TITLE** and also a **FIGURE LEGEND**. Usually the title is the conclusion of the figure. The legend should give a full explanation of the data, including – where appropriate – color keys, scale, and any abbreviations used on the figure. The legend should walk the reader through the experiment at hand. Include in the legend a brief description of the method used. If you feel that more detailed methods are required, you can add additional methods as a separate methods section below each legend. This separate methods section can be a smaller font (to save space).

**Conclusions:** Here you state as a series of bulleted items the conclusions of the data you presented in your Figures. Be brief and to the point. If appropriate, mention any alternative explanations for your

results and mention possible explanations for unexpected results. If you began with a “Model”, your conclusion should reevaluate the same model in the context of your new data.

**Future Directions:** In this section you should explain what you plan to do next on the project. Do your conclusions lead you to a new question? Are you considering trying a new method to answer your original question?

**Acknowledgements:** If you are funded by a URC program, you are required to acknowledge your respective program (i.e., CARE, MARC, CAMP, ...etc.), as well as the grant (IMSD, NIH, NSF, ...etc.). Otherwise, it’s highly recommended you acknowledge those who assisted you on or contributed to your research, which includes the funding source that paid you or provided the moneys used to buy reagents used in your study.

**References:** (Optional) Do not cite a paper unless you have read it yourself. Cite all your references in the text of the poster and list them in this section using a format from a major journal within your discipline.

**Choosing Colors:** We strongly recommend that you have a white poster with black text and colorful, eye-catching figures. Having a white background saves ink (as the paper is white)! In addition, posters with complicated background patterns are difficult for the reader to view.

### **Presenting your Poster – a few suggestions**

- Wear business casual attire. Wear comfortable shoes as you will be standing for long periods.
- Plan a presentation that is about 10-15 minutes in length to accompany your poster. Your verbal presentation should align with your visual presentation. You shouldn’t be jumping inconsistently across your poster.
- Be prepared for frequent interruptions. Viewers will ask you questions as you go along. They do not wait until the end of your presentation.
- Face your audience when speaking, but point to your poster.
- Start with the big picture. Emphasize your project goal. Walk the viewer through all the panels on your poster. Make sure that you end with a take-home message that brings the viewer back to your big picture.
- Remember: If it is on your poster, you should be prepared to talk about it.

**A very entertaining web resource for poster assembly presentation:**

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

Last updated March 25, 2013