

Poster Presentations



Poster sessions are a popular presentation format at many academic conferences. Presenters create a large poster summarizing their project, and they stand near their poster while attendees stroll through the session to learn about the various projects. This format accommodates numerous presentations at once while also allowing the presenter and attendees to discuss projects one-on-one.

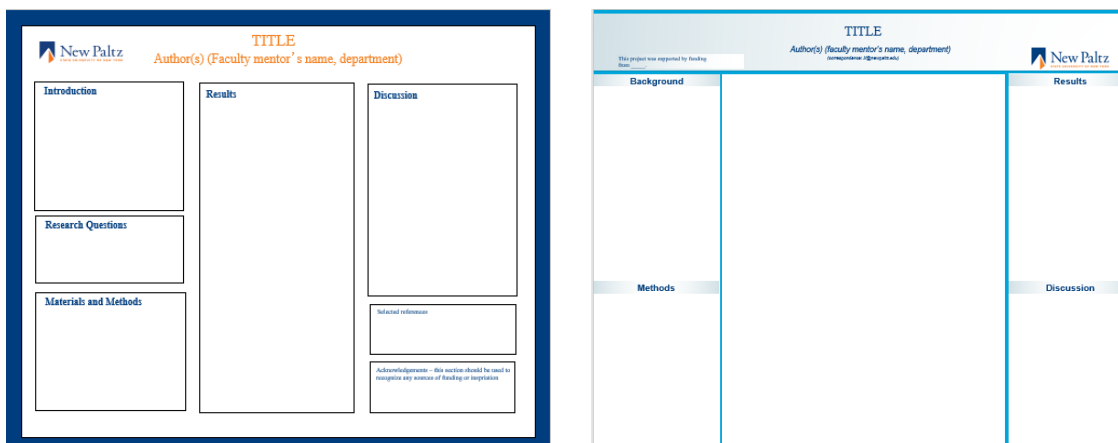
Student Research Symposium Guidelines

For the *Student Research Symposium*, posters should be 31-36" H X 42" W in size, using the landscape format. For in-person symposia, the posters will be held up with the supplied support board and easel.

Most people create their posters with Microsoft PowerPoint, but there are other options too, such as Microsoft Publisher, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, and Canva. You can download several 34" X 42" PowerPoint poster templates at the RSCA website or from the websites listed at the end of this guide.

Poster Creation Tips

Format



1. At the top of the poster, prepare a banner with the title in large type (letters 1-1.5 inches high; 80+ font size) and the authors' names in smaller font type. Place the banner high so it can be seen above people's heads. Many people put the logo for the college and sponsoring agencies in the top corners.

2. Posters often contain these core sections, though not necessarily with these titles: Introduction/Background/Inspiration; Project Purpose/Overview/Research Questions/Goals; Methods/Procedure/Materials/Process; Results/Findings/Discoveries; and Discussion/Conclusion. These sections are often organized in 3-4 columns that read top-down and then left to right. A good rule of thumb is to spotlight the key findings or take-home point by putting them front-and-center in the poster. See the sample posters on the [RSCA site](#).

Content

3. Posters are brief visual summaries of the project. Their purpose is to attract viewers and stimulate discussion, not to provide a comprehensive review. Make sure every item in your poster is truly necessary; inessentials or complex parts can be reserved for your discussions with attendees.

4. Effective posters are often graphic-based – diagrams, charts, images – so that the visuals tell the story. The text is meant mainly to supplement the visuals, unlike in a paper where any images supplement the text. Where possible, try to use graphics to represent your ideas (ex, diagrams or flow charts), your materials, and findings. Attendees are unlikely to stop at your poster if it requires a lot of reading.

Use high-resolution (ex, 300 dpi) photos or images (charts, graphs, cartoons, etc.). Low-res ones might look great on your screen, but they will look fuzzy on a large poster.

Give each graphic a prominent title that captures its main point.

5. Keep in mind that attendees will be viewing your poster from about 5 feet away; its images and text must be readable from that distance. As a rule of thumb, use 1.5 spacing and font size of at least 20-point (key text is often in the 24-36 range, and section titles much larger).

6. Keep text simple. Single-line bullet points work much better than full sentences.

7. As a rule, fill only about 2/3 of the poster's space with images and text. Keep the rest blank (aka, "negative space"). Otherwise, the poster will be so dense that it repels instead of attracts viewers.

8. When choosing a background color, remember that neutral or gray background colors will be easier on the eyes than a bright color. For the text, stick to a single font type. For the poster as a whole, stick to a simple color scheme with 2-4 complementary colors.

9. Most readers will be interested primarily in the basic idea and take-home point. The project's purpose and key finding are the two sections to spotlight. If pressed to clear out some content, dump some of the conceptual background or Method (unless the methods are what make this project interesting!). You can always talk about it when viewers ask follow-up questions.

10. Consider adding a link or, better yet, a sizable QR code for people to learn more about your project. Some presenters use the website to show visitors a short video that helps bring the poster content to life (ex, a gizmo for an engineering project, or a music piece for an arts project). Others use it to provide visitors more information to digest later (ex, a full-length paper on the project or details about other the research team's other projects).

11. Does your project involve doing research on human subjects? If so, it must have been approved by our [Human Research Ethics Board](#) to be presented at the SRS. The one exception is if your project was solely intended as a student research exercise (for a class, for example). Those projects must include this statement: "This project was conducted as a Student Research Exercise and was not approved by the SUNY New Paltz HREB."

Presentation Tips

12. Prepare a short oral presentation (1-2 minutes) to guide interested parties through your poster and the project's main points. The goals of this 'elevator talk' – a talk that lasts as long as an elevator ride – are to make the topic digestible and to stimulate interest in an extended conversation. Design the elevator talk for visitors outside your scholarly area, not experts. Minimize jargon. Emphasize what you did and why you did it.

A clear elevator talk and a visually appealing poster are the two keys to a strong poster presentation.

13. Some attendees prefer to process the poster on their own. At the session, let people peruse your poster for about 30 seconds before offering to walk them through it.

14. Some presenters like to bring handouts of their poster, printed as a normal 8.5" x 11" pdf, that includes their contact information.

15. Some people will pass by without pausing to appreciate your poster. Don't take it personally; there's not enough time for attendees to engage with every poster at the session. Just enjoy the ones who do visit yours.

For More Guidance

Consult with your faculty mentor for suggestions, templates, and feedback. Additionally, these websites offer useful guidance if interested in design tips, templates, etc.

The Basics

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwMFhyH7_5g
- <https://ugs.utexas.edu/our/poster>

Advanced Tips

- <https://www.animateyour.science/post/how-to-choose-the-best-layout-for-your-scientific-poster>
- <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2018/05/11/how-to-design-an-award-winning-conference-poster/>

Templates

- <https://www.newpaltz.edu/research/presentation-opportunities/student-research-symposium/>
- <https://ugs.utexas.edu/our/poster>
- https://www.makesigns.com/SciPosters_Templates.aspx