

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 the chance 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. For online symposia, posters should be created in the large size, but a normal 8.5" X 11" pdf copy should be uploaded to the website.

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 containing the title in large type (letters 1-1.5 inches high; 80+ font size) and the authors' names in smaller font type. This banner should be placed high up on the poster so it can be seen above people heads. The logo for the college and other sponsoring agencies may be placed in the banner.

2. Posters often contain these core sections, though not necessarily with these titles: Introduction/Background; Project Purpose/Overview; Methods/Procedure; Results/Findings; and Discussion/Conclusion. These sections are often organized in 3-4 columns that read top-down and then left to right.

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 deeply complex parts can be reserved for your discussions with attendees.

4. Effective posters are primarily graphic-based – diagrams, charts, images. The visuals tell the story. The text, by contrast, is meant to supplement the visuals, unlike in a paper where the images supplement the text. Where possible, try to use graphics to represent your ideas (ex, diagrams or flow charts), your materials, and findings.

Use high-resolution (ex, 300 dpi) for any 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 likely 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 highlight. If pressed to clear out some content, dump some of the Method (unless the methods are what make this project interesting!). You can always talk about it when viewers ask follow-up questions.

10. Does your project involve conducting research on human subjects? If so, it must have been approved by our [Human Research Ethics Board](#) in order to be presented at the SRS.

The one exception is if your project was intended as only student research exercises (for a class, for example). Those projects can be presented at the SRS, but they must include this statement somewhere on the poster: "This project was conducted as a Student Research Exercise and was not approved by the SUNY New Paltz HREB."

Presentation Tips

11. Prepare a short oral presentation (1-3 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.

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

12. Some people 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.

13. For in-person poster sessions, bring printed handouts of your poster, printed as a normal 8.5" x 11" pdf. Include your contact information on the handouts.

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://ugs.utexas.edu/our/poster>
- https://www.makesigns.com/SciPosters_Templates.aspx