How to Prepare for a Poster Presentation

Overview

Poster Presentations provide an opportunity to share research, creative projects, or scholarly work through visual display and informal discussion. This format encourages conversation, questions, and one-on-one engagement with faculty, staff, students, and visitors.

Poster presentations are well-suited for completed projects, works in progress, exploratory research, proposals, and creative endeavors.

Poster Session Expectations

- Poster Presentations take place in person during a scheduled session.
- Presenters should remain with their poster for the duration of their assigned session.
- Attendees will circulate through the poster area, viewing displays and engaging presenters in conversation.

Preparing to Present

- Prepare a 1–2 minute "elevator pitch" that clearly explains your project to someone outside your discipline.
- You should be able to explain the entire poster in a 5-7 minute presentation.
- Practice explaining your work at different levels depending on the viewer's interest and background.
- Stand near your poster, be approachable, and invite conversation.
- Ask viewers if they would like a brief overview or a full walk-through.
- Expect questions and interruptions — this is part of the poster experience.
- Be confident: you know your work better than anyone else in the room.

Avoid These Common Pitfalls:

Overcrowded text, small fonts, poor color contrast, unclear visuals, reading directly from the poster, and giving the same-length explanation to every viewer.

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Poster Requirements

Posters must be 48 inches wide by 36 inches tall and submitted as a .pdf for printing. Ensure that you proofread your poster and verify its legibility at full scale before submission.

Students must use the official ATU poster templates if they wish for their posters to be printed and should not alter the header, colors, or overall dimensions. If you plan to deviate significantly, you will need to print your own poster.

Poster Design Principles

- Start with a clear story that has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Focus on visuals—figures, images, charts, and diagrams should communicate your key ideas.
- Use a short, clear title that reflects your main takeaway.
- Avoid dense text; posters should be readable in 3–5 minutes.
- Aim for a balance of approximately 20% text, 40% visuals, and 40% white space.

Fonts, Layout, and Readability

- Use sans serif fonts and limit your design to one or two font families.
- Keep section headings consistent in size and style.
- Suggested minimum font sizes for a 48" × 36" poster:
  Title: 85 pt; **Authors:** 56 pt; **Section headings:** 36 pt; **Body text:** 24 pt; **Captions:** 18 pt
- Text should be legible from 5–7 feet away.
- Left-align text and avoid ALL CAPS.

Color, Contrast, and Visual Clarity

- Use 2–3 complementary colors for a clean, professional appearance.
- Ensure strong contrast between text and background.
- Avoid busy backgrounds or color combinations that reduce readability.
- Images should be high resolution and clear at full size.

This guide was adapted and modified from poster design resources developed by MAKESIGNS and PosterNerd.