Poster presentations

Research is often presented in poster form. Check the size you need to produce and whether it should be portrait or landscape.

A poster presentation is not usually an essay stuck on a board! (But do check what is expected for your discipline here.) Plan your information as for an oral presentation – 3 or 4 main points, succinctly made. Add an introduction which gives the background, and a summarising conclusion. Edit ruthlessly!

When you are designing your poster, place the title prominently and make sure the boxes that contain your information are placed in a logical visual pattern for your readers to follow. Include a box with credits for all the people involved in the research the poster describes.

Keeping plenty of white space around each box will make your information easier to read. Use a clear font like Arial or Verdana, and make it big enough to be read at a distance of between 1-2 metres. Bullet points can help the reader to identify important points.

Always have contact details to hand out in case readers want to know more. Sticky notes can be useful to gather comments.

On the day...

Don’t forget to take: drawing pins, sticky pads or Blutack to put the poster up; contact details; handouts; pens and sticky notes for comments; plus your poster!

For more information....

See Presentations 1. Preparing your presentation.

See Presentations 3. Delivering your presentation.

For more on this and other aspects of academic study, see our website at www.reading.ac.uk/studyadvice

© Dr Michelle Reid, Dr Angela Taylor, Dr Judy Turner & Dr Kim Shahabudin. University Study Advice team & LearnHigher CETL (Reading).
PowerPoint slides

These are common and easy to use, but may take a few minutes to set up, so plan this into your timing. Ensure you have a backup plan in case the technology doesn’t work on the day, such as having the slides on a memory stick as well as on the network drive, or having handouts of the slides to give out. Check you know how to change between slides using the mouse or a remote control. Beware of sound effects on animations!

OHPs

The overhead projector may be seen as old fashioned and low tech, but it rarely goes wrong and projects well in a light room. You can design OHP slides on a computer and print them straight onto acetate (make sure it is the right kind). Number your acetates in case they get mixed up. Before the audience arrives, focus the image correctly and check for glare.

35mm transparencies

These look professional but can be expensive to produce. They need to be projected in a dark room, so you might find it difficult to read your notes, or make eye contact with your audience. Arrange for someone to raise and dim the lights for you when necessary.

Flip charts / white board

These are more suitable for small group discussions, as they simply can’t be seen at the back of a large hall. Make sure you have non-permanent pens to write on the whiteboard. Also practice writing in large, clear letters so that it is easy to see.

Handouts

Handouts can mean the audience doesn’t have to copy down all the slides - but they can also be distracting, as people read them instead of listening. If you are presenting to a large audience (for instance at a conference) it can be expensive to provide handouts. Consider whether they can be sent via email or put on a website instead.

Props

Showing an object may be useful as a focus for discussion with a small group. It will work better as a replacement for part of your discussion (e.g. leave out some explanation) rather than reinforcing your message.

Good slide design

Keep your slides simple, uncluttered, and easy to read. Just because you can have music, moving graphics, and bullet points whizzing in and out doesn’t mean you should!

30pt font and above is best for large audiences. Avoid distracting backgrounds, and keep lots of white space between lines/sections. Choose a writing colour that shows up clearly on the background (avoid green & red), and for a professional presentation, stick to simple fonts and avoid cartoons. Keep unnecessary punctuation to a minimum.

Example:

In your presentation, you might say something like:

“Classical Hollywood narrative usually traces a highly predictable story arc. The early part of the film is an exposition of the situations and characters the narrative will be concerned with. The status quo is disrupted by a complication of some sort. For instance, the hero and heroine are parted for some reason, or the virtuous heroine is mistakenly seen as sinful. The last part of the narrative resolves that complication and restores the status quo. This narrative structure has been paraphrased as: Get your hero up a tree - throw rocks at him - bring him down.

Your accompanying slide might look like this, with simple phrases and a memorable image:

Classical Hollywood narrative =

- Exposition
- Complication
- Resolution

Include a slide at the beginning of your presentation with your name and title, and follow this with a slide outlining your talk. End with a slide giving your contact details.