



Making an Impact with your Poster

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Introduction

A good poster works in many ways. It can be a good advertisement for your area of work, an effective way to start a debate, and a great way to raise awareness of an issue.

There are many pieces of software that can be used for creating posters. This document is not tied to any particular piece of software. It outlines the general principles and best practice of what makes a good poster.

The principles can be used with the software of your choice.

Planning your Poster

Communicate

A poster is not a wall mounted essay, more a colourful abstract. The aim of the poster is to grab the attention of your audience which in turn will generate interest in your area of research.

Everything within the poster, including all graphics and text, must relate to the research project you are trying to communicate.

All of your main points and conclusions must be clear and concise.

Only use project details which are absolutely essential for getting your point across.

Try to express your main points graphically.

Requirements

Always read the conference poster requirements clearly. You will be surprised at how many people fail to read these instructions properly. If you are unsure of these requirements, get in touch with conference organisers.

Most conference organisers will give you the following guidelines for submission which are the following areas:

- Word count, specifically a minimum and maximum.
- Orientation and size
- Logos

Audience

Who is your Audience?

Effective communication begins with knowing who your audience is. Your poster is there to get your message across, and it is of no use if the person looking at the poster doesn't understand what they're looking at.

The three main type of audience are:

Specialist: Audience has a high level of knowledge within your discipline. There is a good understanding of unique terminology and practices used within the field. You may go into detail regarding your research without fear of it being misunderstood.

The Wider Field: The audience are in a field of research related to your own, but may not be familiar with the more specialist terms and practices within your area.

General: Little or no familiarity with the subject, explanations must be given in the most basic terms.

Engaging the Audience

Your audience will not approach your poster if its subject is not clear from 3 metres away.

All elements should be visible from at least 1.5m.

In the first three seconds of looking at your poster, the reader is deciding whether to stay and explore the poster or move on.

Make the main heading large and to the point, try to avoid a long main title, you have a whole poster to get your message across.

Layout

The most important aspect of any good academic poster is that it is easy to follow.

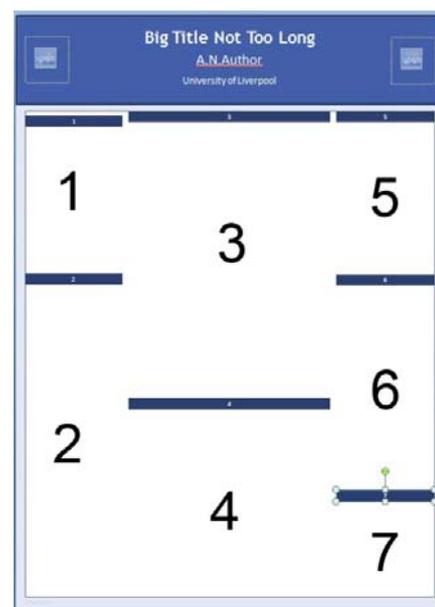
A series of columns allows readers who may be unfamiliar with your subject matter and method of research to easily follow the direction of your information. Newspapers have used this format for decades as studies have shown it is by far the easiest way to make the information readable.

Another useful attribute of a column layout is that it makes it easier for many people to stand at a poster and read at the same time.

Reading order

For poster presentations at most English speaking conferences, the way people will read the poster is from top to bottom and left to right. The examples below highlight in numbered order, the way most posters are read.

Arranging your poster elements in the order shown below will make it easier for a crowd to read the poster on the day.



Not cluttered

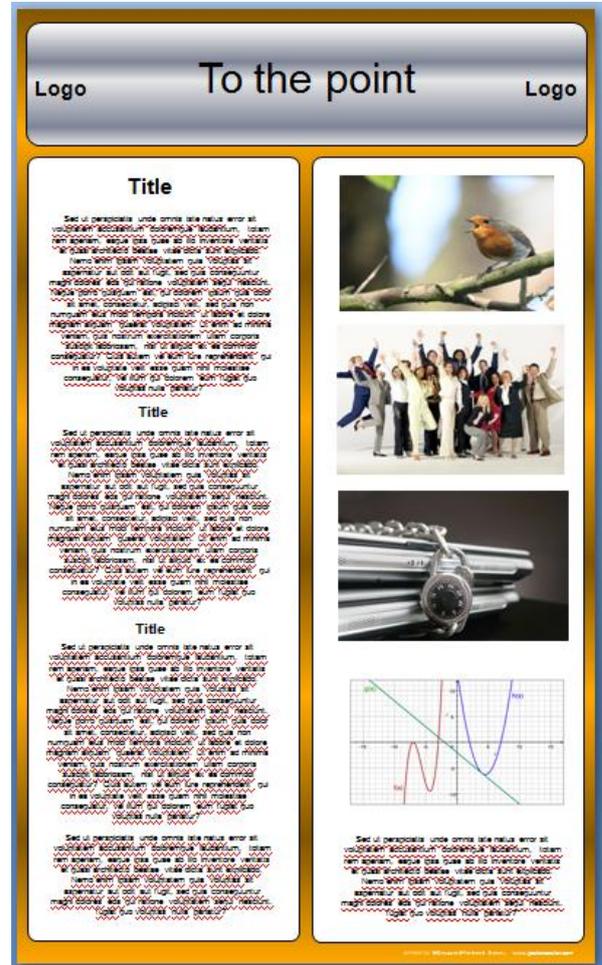
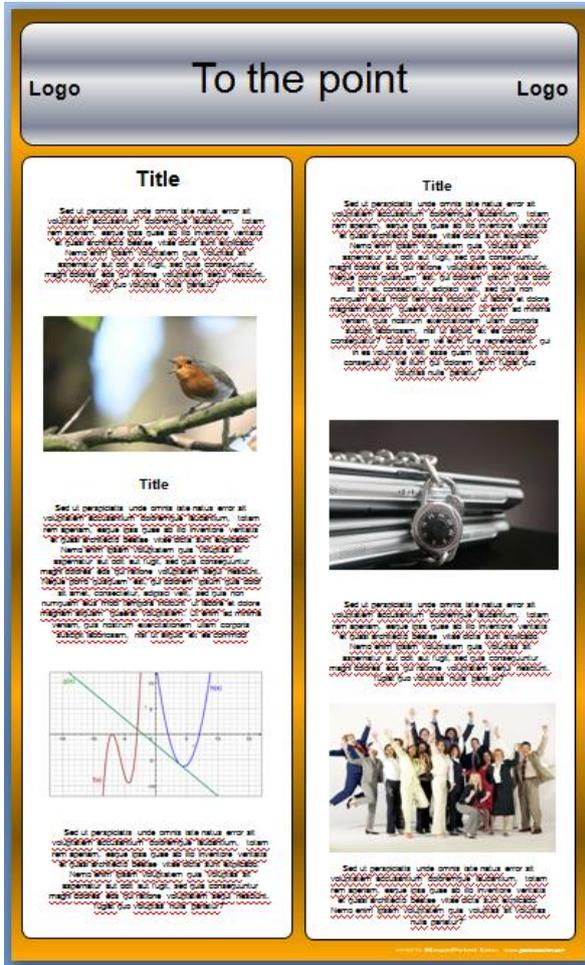
Try not to fill all of the available space on the paper. Having too many items closely packed on the poster; makes the poster hard to read. Try to use white spaces as pauses, this will make the reading experience easier for the viewer, and it will be easier for you to define sections.

Balance

From a design point of view, attractive posters have a good balance of images and text across the entire area of the poster. The following two images are examples of good and poor balance in a poster layout.

Balanced

Unbalanced



Notice how all the text elements together make the poster 'weighted' to one side giving the reader a lot of text to digest all at once.

Placing illustrations throughout the poster breaks the text up into easily readable chunks gives a better flow to the viewing experience.

Using Images and Graphs

Images

Try to keep your graphs/ images and figures above 13cm x 15 cm. This is a good size relative to the size of an A0 sheet and will enable your images and graphics to be seen clearly.

Your graphic elements should be relevant to the subject matter, clear, to the point, and attractive.

Image File Types

There are many types of digital image, and each of them has attributes which make them the best format for the job. The most suitable image format for poster creation is a high resolution JPEG (.jpg) file. The advantage of using this format is that you get a high quality image with a relatively small file size.

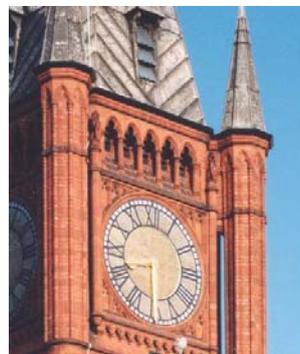
Resolution

Resolution (in relation to digital imagery) is the number of pixels per square inch on a computer screen. The higher this number is, the greater the quality of the picture.

Use images with a resolution of at least 300 dots per inch (DPI). This will give you greater flexibility when resizing your images on the poster.

Avoid low resolution images from web pages. They can appear clean and in focus on the screen, but when printed large will look soft and pixelated.

300 DPI



72 DPI



Cropping

It will be sometimes necessary to crop pictures to focus more on a detail and to remove unnecessary clutter, distractions, and wasted space. In the example below, we want to focus on the robin more and eliminate unnecessary space.

Both of the images below, are from the same source image.



Captions

In graphics where the meaning isn't immediately obvious, it is good practice to provide a caption that is short and to the point underneath the image.

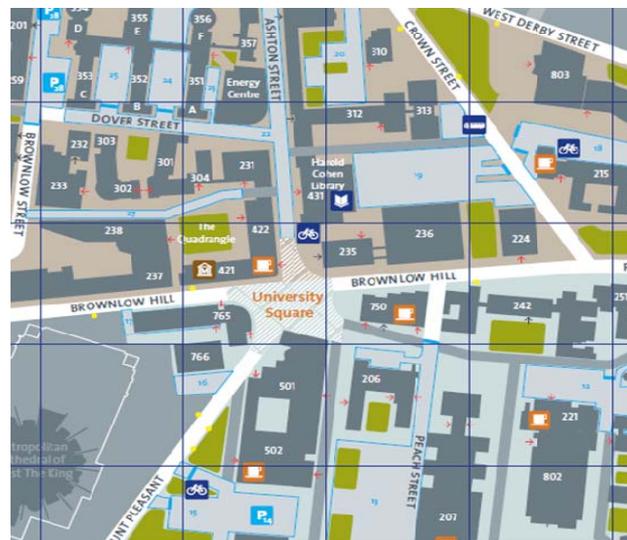


Fig. 1. University of Liverpool Campus Map

Graphs

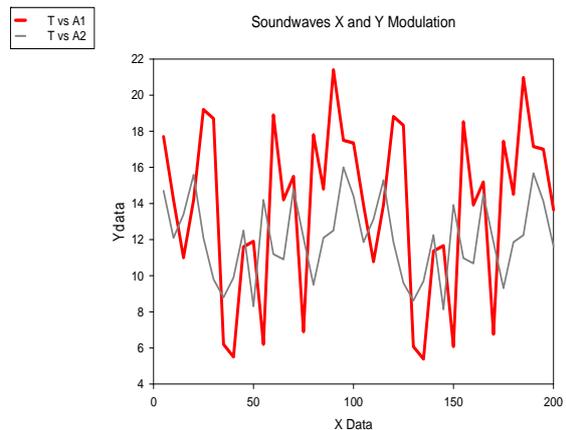
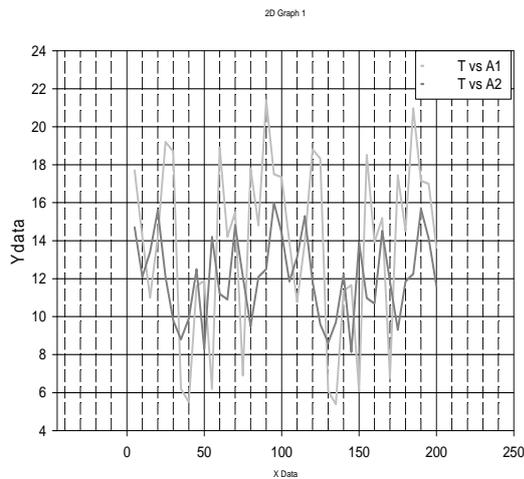
A poster is all about getting your message across clearly. Communicating results and relationships is very important.

Graphs should be clean and simple to understand but most importantly show any relationships as clearly as possible.

All text on the graph needs to be clear and concise, and must follow the same text styles as the rest of the poster.

Below are two example graphs. They were both derived from the same data set. The graph on the right has been formatted for a poster presentation where the left hand graph has been presented exactly as it was produced from the software. Formatting changes which have been made for the poster presentation version include:

- Clearly titled axes and ticks
- No gridlines to detract from the plotted points
- Clear plot lines
- A clearly defined legend
- A short clear title



Use of Text

As mentioned previously, for ease of readability, it is recommended that the text and poster elements are arranged in columns. But layout planning will be useless, if the text is difficult to read.

To present text effectively on the poster, follow the few guidelines below:

- Your main title should be large, **90-150** point bold and readable at a distance of 3 metres.
- Use a different size or boldness of text to define column headings
- Text and titles, when written entirely in capitals are harder to read.

I am a sample of text

I AM A SAMPLE OF TEXT

- Try to avoid large paragraphs of text. Break up large blocks of text into short statements that are short and to the point. Use bullets and lists to achieve this.
- The body text should be 26-32 point.
- Use plain styled fonts such as:

Calibri, Ariel, Deja-vu, Times New Roman

- Avoid using script style fonts as they can be difficult to read.

This is an example of a Script Typeface

- To make text easier to read, place dark text on a light background.
- Avoid very long titles. A short and clear title will give your poster's reader an instant idea of what the poster is about.
- Avoid font sizes below 24 point, anything smaller than this will require the reader to stand very close to the poster, and may be uncomfortable to read.

This is Calibri in 12pt

This is Calibri in 20pt

This is Calibri in 26pt

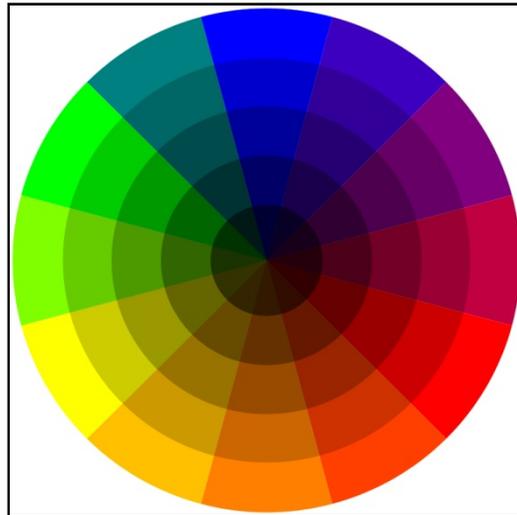
- Avoid using too many different type faces. This will make the poster appear disjointed and may distract the reader from the subject matter.

Using Colour Effectively

Choosing the right colour scheme is a very important choice.

Backgrounds and colours should be subtle to enhance the nature of the subject as opposed to detracting from it.

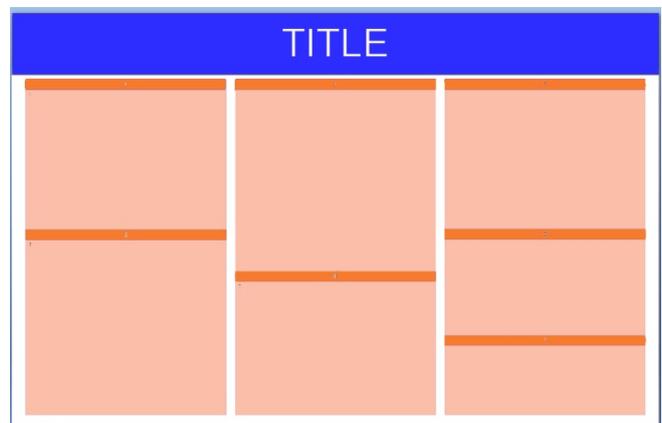
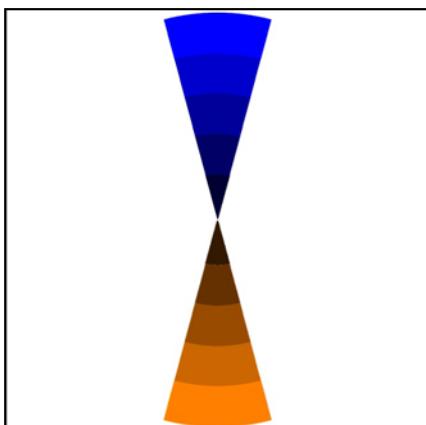
Below is a 'Colour Wheel' that you can use for choosing a colour scheme for your poster.



The three main palettes to look at are: Complimentary, Monochromatic, and Analogous.

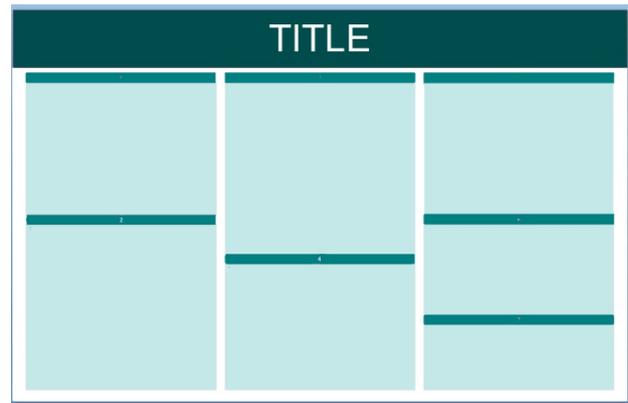
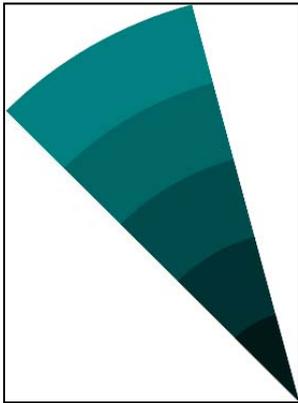
Complimentary

This scheme uses two or more opposite colours in the colour wheel. In this case the colours are blue and orange.



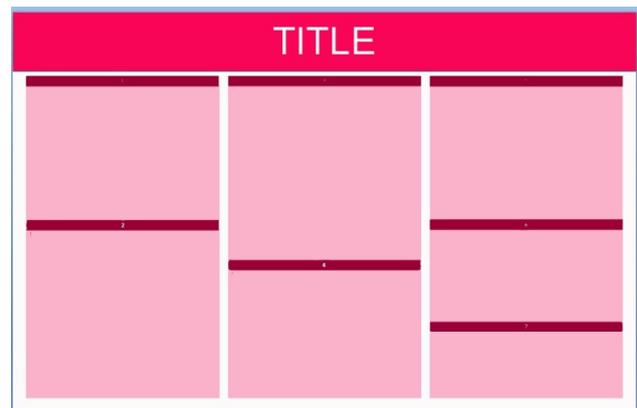
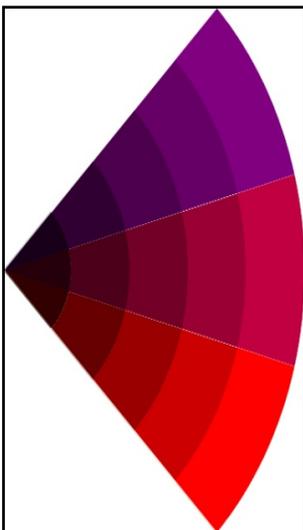
Monochromatic

This scheme uses one colour but in a variety of shades and tints.



Analogous

This uses 3 adjacent colours in the colour wheel to make up the palette. You can vary the shades and tints.



If you look closely at the examples included above, you will see that only 3 colours (plus white) have been used. A title banner, a different colour for headings and a background colour for section bodies.

This is just one example of how these three colour palettes look when applied to a single layout. Please do not feel restricted to presenting your poster layouts in this way.

Help and Information

For help with producing and printing posters with a variety of software packages, visit the computing services web pages at:

www.liv.ac.uk/csd/printing

These pages also include information on paper sizes and printing costs.

If you have any issues regarding your poster printing, and you are unable to find the answers on our web pages, please email the Computing Services Helpdesk on helpdesk@liv.ac.uk or call +44 (0)151 794 4567

Sources of information and further reading.

Websites on academic poster creation

<http://clt.lse.ac.uk/poster-design/>

<http://gradschool.unc.edu/student/postertips.html>

<http://www.spfldcol.edu/homepage/dept.nsf/BC81220B343BE6788525738E005FDA74/F0BB3C96C5ED8A898525754700505502>

<http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/>

<http://saw.uwaterloo.ca/poster/>

<http://www.cns.cornell.edu/documents/ScientificPosters.pdf>

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/researchsupport/disseminate/posters.aspx>

http://www2.napier.ac.uk/gus/writing_presenting/academic_posters.html

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/careers/pgrd/resources/designing-poster/designing-poster>

<http://prezi.com/0e1ftr5f7zIz/designing-an-academic-poster/>

Websites on Colour Theory

Color Theory for Designers : Smashing Magazine Jan 28th 2010 :

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/01/28/color-theory-for-designers-part-1-the-meaning-of-color/>

Colormatters :

<http://www.colormatters.com/color-and-design/basic-color-theory>

Tiger color:

<http://www.tigercolor.com/color-lab/color-theory/color-theory-intro.htm>

Artyfactory :

http://www.artfactory.com/color_theory/color_theory.htm

Images

www.gettyimages.co.uk/

<http://www.csc.liv.ac.uk/~loft06/>