

## Poster Presentations

Poster quickly illustrates the essence of your design and its benefits. It contains less text than the posters used at most science fairs or professional science and engineering conferences because it is meant to be viewed in a large room with dozens of visitors circulating rather quickly among the offerings. Your accompanying two-to-five-minute presentation provides further details about the design, so the viewer has little time to read your poster.

### Designing the Poster

Decide as a team the main message of your poster: the problem and your solution. Boil those down to two sentences: one that defines the problem users have, and the other that highlights what you have designed—your design's approach to solving the problem. Now decide what content the poster needs in order to communicate this message. Then consider secondary information.

Next sketch the poster on a large sheet of easel paper. Visualize your poster in sections or panels that convey your main message. Use index cards or Post-it notes to sketch the graphics and accompanying text. Move these around the easel paper to determine what works best. You want the poster to have a clear, persuasive organization that conveys your message. Toward that end, organize the various elements so that the solution clearly correlates with the problem, and the key design features with the requirements that they fulfill. If you have done research that goes beyond the typical design project—for instance, specialized lab testing or a large-scale survey—look for a way to highlight that.

Now you can begin to work on the specifics of the poster: the layout, graphics, text, fonts, and color.

### Layout

Here are tips for the layout of your poster, which will measure **H = 625 mm** by **W = 450 mm**:

- Use more graphics than text. Your poster should be about 40 percent graphics, 40 percent white space, and 20 percent text.
- Put a title banner across the top. Use **100 pt** so the title is visible 2 meter away.
- Arrange information in sections that correspond to the message you want to convey. For example, you might use a two-part format if your organization is “problem/solution,” and a three-part format if it’s “problem / solution / implementation.” Within these sections, organize information into blocks of figures and text. Make the blocks of information easy to follow by following these guidelines:
  - Align the blocks of information so the viewer can easily follow the flow of information.
  - Left-justify the text, but use ragged edges (unjustified text) for the right margins.
  - Make the blocks of information similar in shape and size.
  - Use white space to separate blocks of information and columns.
  - Use numbers or arrows to indicate the sequence of blocks of information.

- Use font sizes to indicate the hierarchy of information: bigger fonts for headings and captions, smaller fonts for explanatory text. (
- Leave margins on all four sides of the poster.

### **Graphics**

Emphasize graphics, not text, and select photos, drawings, tables, and other graphics that clearly convey your main message. Here are tips for using graphics effectively:

- Eliminate unimportant information from each graphic. Remove extraneous labels and dimensions from figures, and redo a table to make it less detailed. Don't number figures or include explanatory keys and footnotes (although you should give each figure a caption). If the viewer doesn't get the point of a figure or table in 10 seconds, the graphic has failed in its purpose.
- Make figures large enough to be viewed six feet away.
- Make each figure stand out from the text. You may do this with a border or with a background color from a PowerPoint autoshape.

### **Text**

Keep the explanatory text to a minimum, but make it clear, emphatic, and informative. One consultant on poster design recommends repeating this mantra when editing the text: "There always is too much text. Always too much text" (Radel, 1999).

### **Strategies for writing concisely**

Pare down sentences and phrases. Here is a portion of a rough draft of a poster featuring a children's entertainment module for the backseat of a car. The text is loaded with extra words:

### **Font size and style**

To make your text easy to read, follow these guidelines:

- Font size
  - Title: 100 point
  - Captions for graphics: 36 to 48 point
  - Main headings: 36 to 48 point
  - Supporting details: 30 to 36 point
- Font style
  - Keep the style simple; avoid fancy fonts and effects.
  - Use a sans serif font (one without flourishes at the end of lines) for headings and titles. Use sans serif or serif (one with flourishes at the end of lines) for the rest of the text.
  - Use the same font size and style for headings of the same importance.
  - Don't use all uppercase letters for headings; they are hard to read.

### **Color**

Keep poster colors subdued and functional so as not to distract from the content.

- Use a neutral background (white or a subdued color).
- Use only two or three colors.
- Avoid garish colors.
- Make sure text and graphics stand out clearly.

- Use similar colors to connect images and ideas. For example, use the same background color for text that points out a specific problem and text that explains how to solve it.