

# Guidelines for your research poster

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**The goal of this document is to give structure to scientific posters.**  
Benefit for you: avoid my comments by following these guidelines.

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Motivation	Content	Form	Analysis
M1 Excite	C1 1 block 1 topic	F1 Too much	A1 Exps answer Q
M2 Audience	C2 Less=More	F2 Reading Order	A2 Limitations
M3 Refresh	C3 Self-contained	F3 Layout	A3 Peer review
M4 Unburden	C4 Define Terms	F4 No Sentences	
	C5 No Guessing	F5 Draw Attention	
		F6 Complete Figs	
		F7 Find Examples	

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## Tips:

- Useful blog: How to design an award winning poster.
- I prefer to do my posters in inkscape.

## Motivation of your presentation

**M1. Excite the viewer** The goal of a poster is to advertise your research so people will want to read your report/paper. Excite us!

**M2. Audience.** Whom are you presenting for? What do you want the audience to take away? What is their background and what are they looking for? Help your audience find it. Avoid Jargon.

**M3. Refresh.** Do not assume your audience will have remembered anything from any other source; there may also be new viewers present. If a topic is important: briefly repeat it.

**M4. Unburden the audience.** If the audience misinterprets the message it is the fault of the presenter. It's the responsibility of the presenter to reduce the effort of understanding. Prof Freeman: *The most dangerous mistake you can make is assuming that the reviewer will understand the point.* Audience understanding can be validated by asking them.

## Content of the presentation

**C1. A single block has a single topic.** A modular block in your poster has a title to scope the topic. It has a concluding phrase that makes the main point of the topic.

**C2. Less is more.** Every word/figure/image should have an explicit reason to exist. Do this test: *Can I safely remove it yes or no?* Presenting the core essence takes time and effort; it enhances understanding.

**C3. Self-contained.** The main point of the poster has to be understandable without a presenter. While you are busy explaining your poster, another viewer who just walks in should be able to understand the key idea without your help.

**C4. Define terms.** Do not assume the audience will know specific symbols/terms/abbreviations. Use a defined symbol/term consistently and uniquely. All terms in an equation should be explained.

**C5. No guessing.** Never expect the audience to do inference. If the viewer has to guess, the guess will often be not what you had in mind. Always explicitly write what the viewer is supposed to see/conclude.

## Syntax, layout and form

**F1. Do not present too much.** Your goal is to advertise and excite. Nitty gritty details should be in the report not in the poster. Show just enough so a reader can follow, no more. Do not overwhelm, do not even try to be complete with all details: it will scare people away.

**F2. Use numbers to show reading order.** Make explicit how you wish your poster to be read: Numbers the reading order.

**F3. Good layout** eases the viewer's effort. Be consistent. Keep some white-space, don't scare people away with an avalanche of detail.

**F4. Do not write long sentences.** Use bullet points with one phrase per point. One phrase fits on a single line. Correct grammar is secondary, e.g., there is no need for complete sentences with a subject, a verb, etc.

**F5. Draw attention.** Make your poster visually stand out from all others. The goal is to advertise.

**F6. Figures are complete and have a conclusion.** Label all axis, show the units on the axis, use a legend with clear differences between entries and add a title to each (sub)figure so that the reader can directly see what is shown. Do not use too thin lines or too small of a font. Always add the conclusion you would like the viewer to draw.

**F7. Example poster.** Find some scientific posters on the internet and apply these guidelines. Make a list of things you do/do not like in a poster.

## Presenting analysis

**A1. Experiments answer a question.** If you present experiments, note that every experiment starts with a question. Write the question on the poster. The experiment should answer that question. Write the answer on the poster.

**A2. Limitations.** If applicable: What are the limitations of your method. No method will always be the best. Showing insight where it fails is strong. The goal of research is understanding.

**A3. Peer review.** Find a peer to review each others posters. Check if their poster follows these guidelines. Keep in mind that if an honest viewer did not understand it, it is the mistake of the presenter.