

How to Design a Research Poster

A well-designed research poster can attract collaborators, boost visibility in a topic area, and demonstrate your expertise. Adhering to a few simple guidelines can ensure your poster communicates your research accurately and effectively. A poster generally includes more pictures than words and is organized into columns read from left to right. It should **be simple and visually appealing, follow a logical format, and stand alone**. Although conference-specific instructions vary, a poster should build upon the accepted abstract (e.g., use it as an outline).

Common Sections

- **Background or Introduction:** Introduces the research problem and justifies its importance.
- **Objective or Purpose:** Clearly states the aim, hypothesis, or objective.
- **Methods:** Describes exactly how the research was conducted.
- **Results:** Presents key findings in text and figures, tables, charts, or graphs.
- **Conclusions:** Summarizes main takeaways and suggests next steps/future directions.

Optional Sections

- **References:** Lists the sources cited in the poster.
- **Acknowledgments:** Acknowledges any assistance or financial support for the research.
- **Further Information:** Includes contact details or additional information about the project.

As you design the poster, **decide which outcomes you will highlight**. What is your hook – Scope? Population? Hot topic? Pretty picture? Be sure you can articulate the most important and interesting findings of your project. **Do NOT try to fit an entire manuscript on the poster.**

During the conference, stand with the poster and present your findings to viewers. Consider providing printed **supplements** next to the poster board. These can include copies of the abstract, references, or your business cards. Also consider including a QR code that viewers can scan, linking them to a webpage with the previously listed supplement suggestions and a copy of the poster.

Additional Considerations

- Be sure to **read the conference-specific instructions**, which often include the poster board size. Make your final poster size one foot smaller than the board size on each side. Posters can be printed on thick paper, fabric, or vinyl – the latter two can be folded into a suitcase and ironed onsite.
- Strategically and consistently **use bullet points, numbering, font and bold formatting, and color to emphasize points** and guide the reader through the poster. Use consistently sized headings and body text (no smaller than 30-point font). Be sure at least 30% of the poster is white space background.
- **Use tables, figures, and images to highlight only the most important information.** All tables and figures should have titles, axis labels, legends, and unit increments. All images should have titles and legends that clearly explain what readers are viewing. Ensure significant results are clearly denoted on figures and add notations, arrows, or circles to highlight important features. Keep colors consistent throughout the figures. Images must be the property of the authors or cited appropriately.
- Be sure to **name and save your presentation file according to conference requirements**. Be sure to save the print version in PDF format to preserve formatting.