Creating Large Format Posters Using PowerPoint

TIP SHEET

INTRODUCTION

• The ideal poster is designed to:
  o Tell a story
  o Provide a brief overview of your work
  o Initiate discussion
  o Stand alone when you’re not there to provide an explanation.

• Before you begin working in PowerPoint, sketch out your poster on paper.

• Decide what 3-4 points you want the poster to express.

• Decide on size, background, and layout of your poster (you can change this if it doesn’t work).

• Remember: Simple is usually better! Someone should be able to fully read your poster in less than 10 minutes.

• Also remember the typical circumstances in which a poster is viewed: a hot, congested room filled with people who are primarily there to socialize, not look at posters. Cramped!

• Your poster should be interesting and visually “slick.”

CREATING THE POSTER

• Start PowerPoint 2007 to open a new slide presentation. You will be making just ONE slide in PowerPoint.

• Set the poster size by clicking the Design tab and “Page Setup. Under “Slides sized for:” select “Custom.” Set the width and height. At the USC School of Medicine, a 56-inch width and a 44-inch height are the largest dimensions the printer can handle.
• Use the ruler and the gridlines to help you line up your poster elements. Under the View tab, select “Ruler” and “Gridlines.”

• Display the drawing guides for additional help in aligning elements. In the Home tab, click “Arrange – Align – Grid Settings.” Click “Display drawing guides on screen.”
• Your slide should now look like this:

![Grid](image)

• In the View tab, click “Fit to Window” to see the whole slide (if you can’t already). You can also zoom in to work on details.

• To add elements to your poster, use the Insert tab, then add Text Boxes. Arrange the text boxes on your slide. You should have 3-4 vertical columns. Here are some suggested font sizes:
  - **Title**: 72-120 points (should be nearly the entire width of the poster)
  - **Authors**: 48 – 80 points
  - **Headings**: 36 – 72 points
  - **Text**: 24 – 48 points

  *Whatever point size you use, be consistent among elements in the poster!*

• Examples of possible combinations of Headings/Sections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination 1</th>
<th>Combination 2</th>
<th>Combination 3</th>
<th>Combination 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author/Title/Affiliation</td>
<td>Author/Title/Affiliation</td>
<td>Author/Title/Affiliation</td>
<td>Author/Title/Affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Background Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Sources/Settings</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Design</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Descriptive Issues</td>
<td>Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>Statistical Analysis</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle Findings</td>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Further Research Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Experiment with different types of styles and fonts. The most commonly used fonts are Times New Roman and Arial. For the title, consider using a large, bold Sans-Serif type font, such as Arial Black, Franklin Gothic Heavy, Tahoma, or Verdana.

• Select a background using one of the designs in the Design tab. Play around until you get the color scheme that works well with the subject of your poster.

• You can insert images, but be sure the image resolution is high enough to prevent a grainy image once the poster is printed.

• Here is an example of a completed “poster” slide:

![Example poster slide]

• Proof your poster before printing in large format. Print on 8 ½ x 11 paper in color. Select “scale to fit paper” in the print dialog box. (It’s a good idea to bring a stack of 8 ½ x 11 printouts of your poster to distribute at your poster session.)

• Print your poster on a large format printer or take it to a print service provider who can accommodate large paper sizes.
ADDITIONAL TIPS

✓ Top priority should be placed on readability.
✓ Maintain a good contrast between the background color and text color.
✓ Use colors that stand out.
✓ Do not use a gradient color fill in the background (does not print well).
✓ Do not use black in the background.
✓ Use a mix of upper and lower case letters.
✓ Avoid putting too much information on your poster (posters with 1000 words or less are ideal).
✓ Add thin borders to each photo or chart to give them definition.

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