

Tips for Better Poster Design

Define Focus and Organization

- Allow the viewer to quickly assess what your poster is about, how many points you are making, and how much work it will be for them to read more. Do this by establishing visual priority through placement, color, and size. These things help readers identify the most important parts of your poster, and find your main points. Consider how most of your audience is accustomed to processing information—top to bottom, left to right.
- Use subheads to make sections clear and break up text
- Notice that alignment and grouping can be as effective as a visual break as lines and boxes

Make it Readable

- Fonts: pick most legible options, keep number of fonts low
- Standardize sizes, indents, bullet style
- Don't use all caps for longer type sections
- Consider bulleted lists for portions of the text rather than all paragraphs
- Use columns. Very long lines of text are difficult to read.
- Avoid hyphenation and justified type
- Pay attention to contrast, make sure type is readable on the background. Avoid large amounts of white type on a colored background.
- Print out a small section of your poster at full size and check readability from a distance.

Make Other Graphic Decisions Based on Your Content

- Pick colors that compliment your subject and each other
- Use only a few colors to create cohesive feel
- If you have a topic that speaks to a specific graphic look (for example, Minority Student Achievement Network=urban), apply graphics and fonts to highlight your content, not overwhelm it

Small Things Make a Difference

- Margins
- High quality logos and graphics
- Try different layouts: sometimes your content won't follow the usual pattern
- If you have doubts, get a second opinion.
- Consider using more sophisticated tools to set up graphics or poster. It will be more work to learn the programs, but you get more control over your finished product.

Get Inspiration

Look at advertising--magazines, newspapers, posters. Think about what makes them work and try to apply what you like to your design. Go to a store you like and look at their signs. Also look at clothes and housewares for colors and patterns that work well together.

Web Sites for More Information

www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurrin1/posteradvice.htm

www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/index.html

High Resolution Logos

NSF: www.nsf.gov/policies/logos.jsp

UW-Madison: www.uc.wisc.edu/logo/download-logo.html