# Tips for Creating Academic Posters

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## 1 Introduction

Posters are visual representations of information. A research poster should clearly communicate your research data through the use of images, graphs, and text. Posters should be designed to support the presentation of your research both as a foundation for face-to-face discussions and as a stand-alone resource.

## 2 Sketch it out

Before you begin your poster, sketch your ideas on paper:
- How many columns?
- How many rows?
- Consider images and graphs as you sketch your design
- Think about the sequence of your materials (you are telling a story—poster should have a logical flow)
- Good layouts have 35% empty space and 35 % graphics
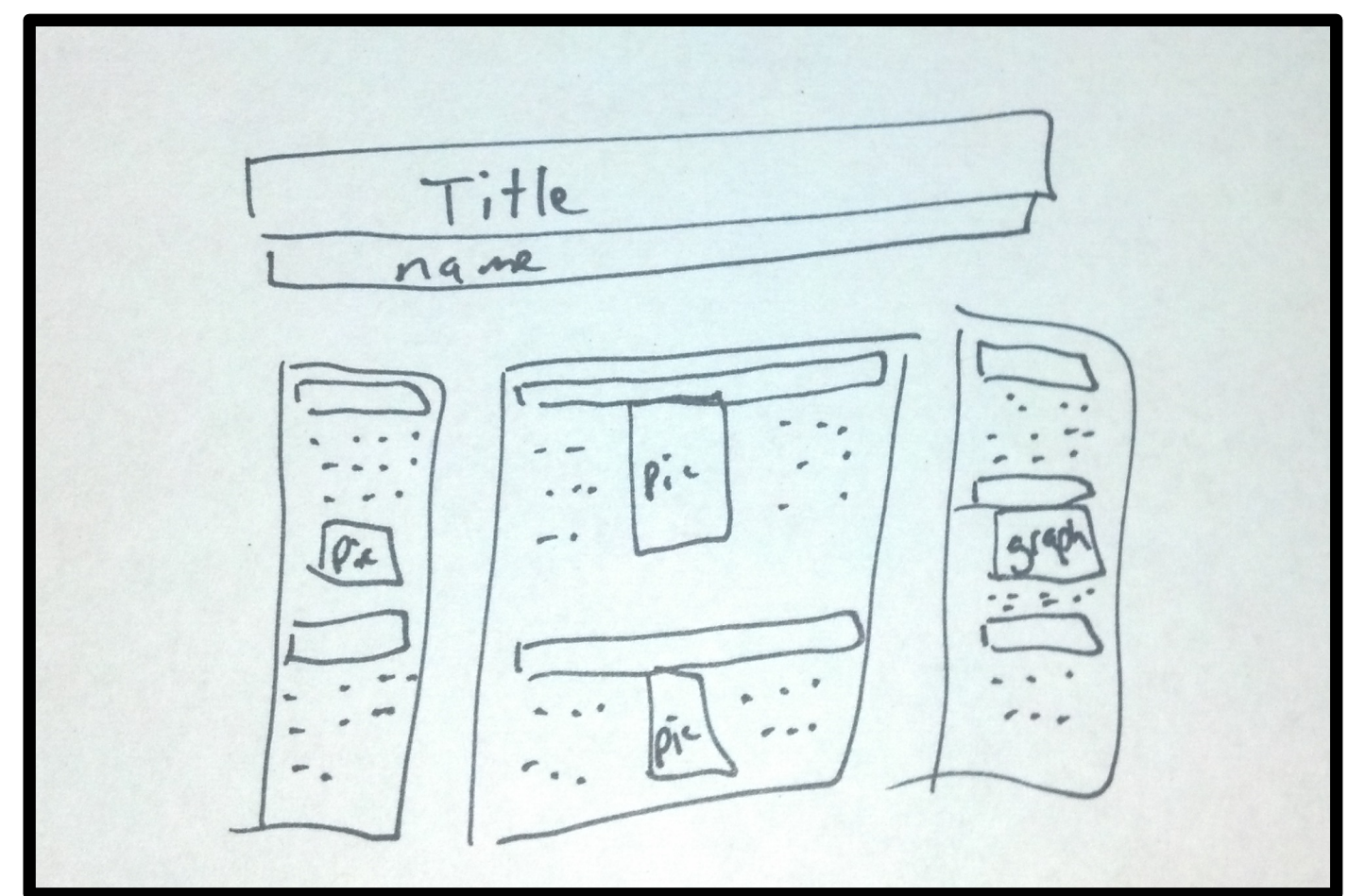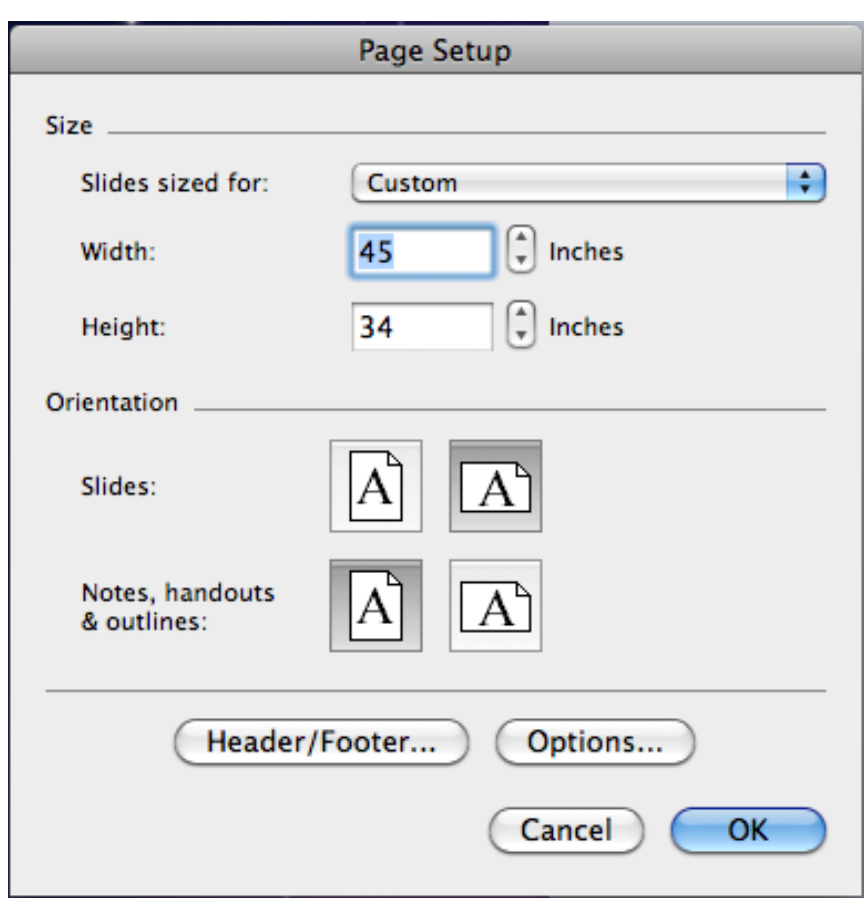
## 3 Sections to include

Consider what sections you need to include (discuss with mentor):
- Title and author(s) with affiliation(s)
- Introduction (100 words)
- Hypothesis
- Materials & Methods (200 words)
- Discussion (150 words)
- Results (150 words)
- Conclusions (200 words)
- References (10 citations)
- Acknowledgements (40 words)
- Contact info (20 words)

## 4 Collect Materials

### Images

- Avoid pixelated images-- use high resolution images. Printed images should have minimum 300 dpi.
- Images used as backgrounds can cause problems with the printing process.
- Add titles & captions to your graphs and images.

### Tables

**Valiela (181):**
- Tables should be used for data too complicated to be presented in text.
- Data that show no significant differences can be summarized in text, without showing all the data.
- Codes and nonessential numbers should not appear in tables.

**HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR GRAPHIC DESIGN?**
(YOU MAY PICK TWO)

FAST — DIPPED IN UGLY SAUCE WITH HASTE AND CARELESSNESS — CHEAP

TRASH GO AWAY — IMPOSSIBLE UTOPIA — YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR / JUST A WASTE OF TIME TO BE TOO LATE

FREE — TRY AGAIN — GREAT

Infographic from http://www.coolinfographics.com/blog/2010/12/26/how-would-you-like-your-graphic-design-infographic.html

Page Setup
Size
Slides sized for: Custom
Width: 45 Inches
Height: 34 Inches
Orientation
Slides:
Notes, handouts & outlines:
Header/Footer... Options...
Cancel OK

### Graphs

**Tufte on friendly graphics(183):**
- Words are spelled out.
- Words run left to right.
- Little messages help explain data.
- Labels placed on graphic may eliminate the need for a legend
- Graphic attracts viewer; provokes curiosity.

**Valiela on graphs(181):**
- Use simplified figures rather than tables if at all possible.
- Simplify figure legends to make them more easy to read.

***Your graphs must truthfully represent the data.***

## 5 Formatting

- Use 1 slide in PowerPoint. Set the slide size first (PPT>file menu>page setup>45" x 34").
- Clarity and readability are important components to an effective poster. Be consistent.
- The poster should flow. Use arrows, numbers or letters to aid viewer.
- Use blank space. Do not fill every space or gap—leave some areas blank so that the audience can stay focused on individual sections.
- Avoid using templates from the web. You may not realize there is a problem until you send it to be printed.
- Text boxes should be aligned and uniform.
- Avoid blocks of text longer than 10 sentences; instead, intersperse text with graphs and images.

### Text

- 2-3 fonts. Keep it simple and consistent.
- **90-60-30 text rule**
  - 90 pt font = title size
  - 60 pt font = subheading size
  - 30 pt font = body size
- Use **bold** or *italic* styles to emphasize.
- Avoid using all caps AS IT IS DIFFICULT TO READ.
- Use bulleted lists instead of sentences and paragraphs.
- Text should be left-justified.
- Serif fonts are easier to read for body text.

Clip art retrieved from http://www.wonqx.com/color/ images/primary-secondary.gif

Serif — fancy
Sans Serif — not fancy

**90**60 30 *Rule*

### Color

- Colors should highlight or emphasize content or separate and define sections.
- Use 2-3 colors at most.
- Be consistent.
- Avoid dark backgrounds.
- Use images or graphs to determine color scheme of poster (don't let them clash!).

- Is this easy to see?
- Is this easy to see?
- Is this easy to see?
- Is this easy to see?
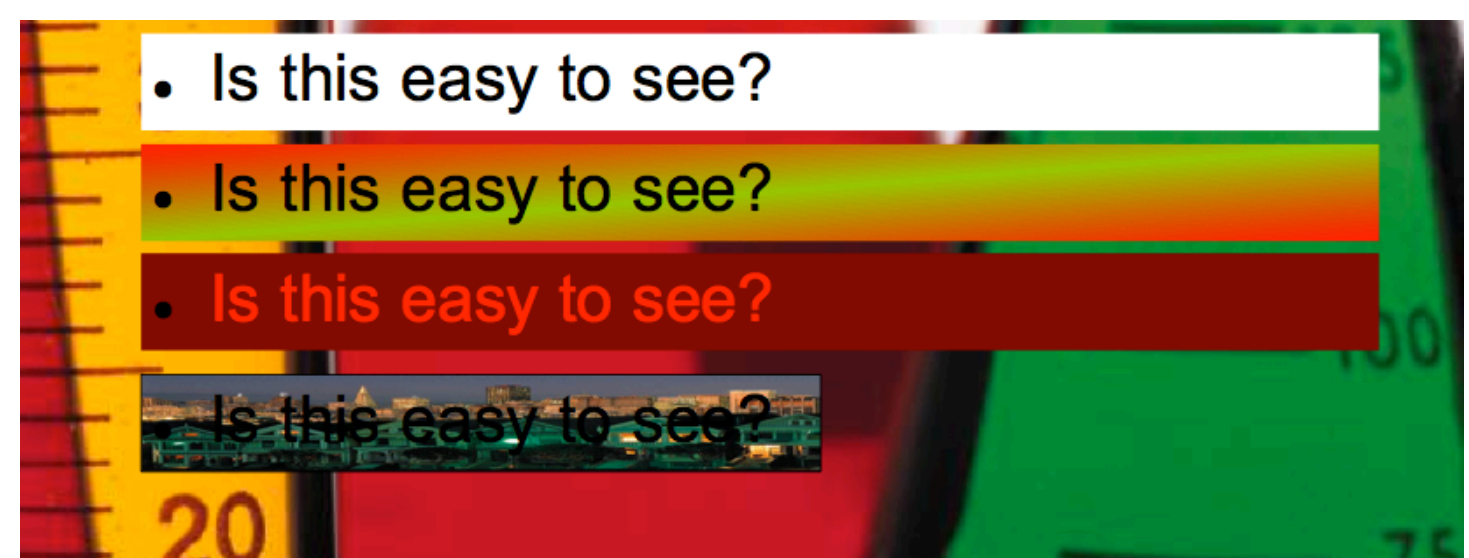
## 6 Points to Consider

- If you have more information to share, create a handout or a postcard summary.
- Avoid using jargon—consider your audience.
- Aim for 800-1000 words (PPT>file menu>properties>statistics).

## 7 Review

- Read, reread, & reread.
- Edit to remove extraneous text.
- Have a friend proof the poster.
- Use the spellcheck feature (Tools/ Spelling).
- Check grammar & punctuation.
- Ask your mentor to review poster.

## 8 Bibliography

Tufte, E. R. (2001). The visual display of quantitative information (2nd ed.). Cheshire, Conn.: Graphics Press.

Valiela, I. (2001). Doing science :Design, analysis, and communication of scientific research. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

## 9 Additional Resources

- NSF Video and Poster competition
  http://posterhall.org/igert2012/posters#/default
- Designing posters
  http://colinpurrington.com/tips/academic/posterdesign
- Poster Perfect
  http://the-scientist.com/2011/09/01/poster-perfect/
- Scientific Poster Tutorial
  http://www.makesigns.com/tutorials/
- Graphs
  http://wikieducator.org/images/9/90/JSMath6_Part2.pdf
- Tips for creating poster presentations
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-8fgs_0hs
- Making a poster using PowerPoint
  http://dl.dropbox.com/u/74453/Making_a_Poster_Using_PowerPoint.pdf