Design Guide: Academic Posters

*Clear design starts with clear thinking!*

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|  | **Define audience** | * Where are you presenting? * Are you speaking alongside your poster or will it stand alone? * Who is the audience? * How much do they already know about your topic? |

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|  | **Define theme** | You know a lot about your topic, but you won’t be able to get all that onto your poster. Most viewers will spend 5 minutes or less looking at your poster, so ask yourself: *“If they only remember one idea about my work, what should that be?*” Write down your answer.  This is your theme. Everything you choose to put into your poster should support this theme. |

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|  | **Define content** | Posters tell stories: what you did, why you did it and what you learned from doing it. What content must you include? List it, then rank each item in importance. Use the back if necessary. |

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|  | **Think out visuals** | Your text will need to be concise. If you can explain something better in a chart, table or image, do so.   * What visuals do you already have? * What visuals could you create? |

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|  | **Write it up** | 1. Write an outline of your content or create a concept/visual map/flowchart connecting the ideas. 2. Write up your content, including:    * the title: 70-85 point font size    * section titles: 36-54 pt    * the text: 24-30 pt    * image captions: 18 pt |

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|  | **Lay it out** | 1. Print the text, titles, captions & cut into the sections. 2. Print out your photos and illustrations at the size you think you’ll use. 3. Create a mockup: lay out the title, text, and visuals at the location and scale of your final poster. Step back a few feet. Is there enough white space, or is the text crowded? Are the visuals easy to understand? Is there good color contrast? Make needed adjustments. |

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|  | **Final checklist** |  |

* I have all the required sections/elements.
* My text is readable from 2-3 feet, both color and size.
* My text is concise.
* I’ve used two complimentary fonts, one for titles and one for text.
* I have enough white space so the poster isn’t crowded.
* I’ve used 2-3 colors with consistency.
* I’ve used color to draw attention to important items.
* I have clear visuals for each section of my poster.
* My visuals are titled.
* My sources and images are cited.
* The elements are aligned and balanced.
* I’m happy with my poster!

Adapted from the Design lab at UNC University Libraries

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URL: https://guides.lib.unc.edu/academicposters