

Most Common Comments – POSTERS

I. Content

A. Introduction

1. Proofread!
2. Boil your introduction down to its essence. Not all background info is relevant BUT don't leave out important details that people will end up asking over and over
3. Don't plan to fill in gaps when people ask questions - the poster needs to stand alone
4. Don't be repetitive – space is limited

B. Objectives

1. **Make sure objectives are explicitly stated – what is the point?**
2. Put this early so that reader knows why they're investing their time in your poster
3. Make this stand out – highlight, but in bold, use a different color, etc.

C. Methods / Analysis

1. If a picture would tell the story, use it instead of explanation. Don't use full text AND a picture – you generally will only need one
2. Explain what you're trying to accomplish with your analyses – give this more space than the actual details of your tests / methods

D. Results

1. If multiple objectives are included, give results for all of them. Only tell stories if you can tell them completely. Don't include an objective if you don't follow it all the way through

E. Interpretation

1. This is the inverse of the objectives – objectives tell us what you're looking for, interpretation tell us what you found

F. Significance

1. **Provide broader significance – why should we care / take-home message**
2. Very important: show how it all fits together – have very clear story

G. General comments

1. Several judges said: “Minimal information on poster though interesting details provided orally” – should not be the case
2. Put data in context of other studies / populations / species / management, etc
3. **Minimal words if possible – not too wordy!**

II. Style

A. Structure

1. Use the same sentence structure for each series of bullet points
2. Make sure tense is consistent

B. Visual effectiveness

1. Make sure font is legible, both in size and font type and font color
2. Use the same font type and size throughout for main points. Only use bigger or bolder if making an important point but use sparingly.
3. Use columns and know the natural flow of reader – jumping all over the place breaks up the story
4. Don't include too many graphics – it gets confusing. Include only what is necessary for the story
5. Include keys for maps and explanations for graphics
6. Use bullets or spaced out sentences instead of huge blocks of text which are hard to read from a distance
7. Pair text with graphics – don't have the graphics so far removed from the text that people have to search for what you're referring to
8. Don't use a picture as a background unless you put transparent text boxes over it
9. Literature cited can be a very small font (12 pt) because very few people will actually care to read it
10. Use white space. The entire poster does not have to be wall to wall images and text

C. Presentation effectiveness

1. Show your poster to someone who is in no way involved in your study organism or methods and see if they can follow it. These are your target audience
2. Cut down on lingo and jargon. Aim at college freshman (your students!). You know what they are capable of understanding. Assume this for your general audience

Most Common Comments – TALKS

I. Content

A. Introduction

1. Proofread!
2. Limit your introduction – keep it to the key points that the audience needs to know in order to understand your talk
3. Give a basic background that is not drowning in jargon and lingo – keep it simple

B. Objectives

1. **IMPORTANT –most frequent complaint is lack of CLEAR objectives** – you have to include this early and often. Repeat as necessary
2. Make sure the scope of your objectives is appropriate – ex/ find a balance between “We’re trying to solve global warming” and “I want to know the temperature of this cell at 3pm”
3. Give objectives only for parts of your study that you’re going to tell the entire story for. If you don’t have results for it yet, don’t mention it – it will go in your “future work” section

C. Methods / Analysis

1. Use graphics whenever possible – pictures are easier to understand and require fewer words on a slide
2. Tie back in to your objectives – how are your methods helping you address each objective?

D. Results

1. Tie back in to your objectives – how do your results address your objectives
2. Include sample sizes
3. Spend most time here explaining results – do NOT rush through this
 - a. Explain what you’re trying to accomplish with your analyses – give this more weight than the actual details of your tests / methods
 - b. The more complex an idea or a slide is, the slower you need to go on it and the more time you need to give
4. Use big graphs and big labels!
5. Don’t put information on your slides that you’re not going to mention – if you aren’t going to mention your p-values or your f-statistics, don’t put it on the slide

E. Interpretation

1. Explain what your results mean. Don’t just mention the trends, explain what biological relevance they have

2. State this clearly – it's as important as your objectives. Don't just flash up a graph – interpret it, make observations about trends and significance while you're on that slide

F. Significance

1. **IMPORANT – second most frequent complaint is lack of clear “Why do we care” statement**
2. Avoid generalities (i.e. we all care about global warming / the environment / endangered species, etc.)
3. Tie back in to your objectives to give a complete story
4. Give a feeling of context – how does this animal / population / chemistry compare to others?
5. Provide a take-home message even if you don't use those exact words – what do you want people to remember from your talk?

G. Questions

1. Do not react negatively to questioners. Be gracious and courteous and respectful.
2. Be aware of time when answering questions – be concise
3. Do not ask for questions. Let the moderator indicate whether there's time or not
4. Don't make assumptions about your audience – don't assume that they know or don't know, care or don't care about a certain topic

II. Style

A. Structure

1. Make good use of time. What is the most important part of your talk? Give that the most time. Plan out your slides and your time accordingly
2. **Put fewer words on slides!** – you don't have to put everything you're going to say on each slide – you can say things that you didn't write down
3. Have a clear delineation between intro / methods / results / etc.
4. Use oral transition sentences between each slide to give a flow to your presentation. Know what comes after each slide and give a heads up about the direction you're taking
5. Do not use animation unless it facilitates your talk – things should appear or disappear without flying, spinning, sliding, etc.
6. Use the same font type and size throughout for main points. Only use bigger or bolder if making an important point but use sparingly
7. Use bullets instead of blocks of sentences - use the same sentence structure for the bullets on each slide

8. Use white space – each slide does not have to be wall to wall images and text
9. Make sure tense is consistent
10. If you're doing two objectives, present the entire story for one, then the entire story for the other instead of breaking it up by methods of both, results of both, etc.

B. Visual aids

1. Label figures clearly. Always explain what your axes are before going into interpretation of the figure
2. **Make figures huge.** In some cases, it's appropriate to give them an entire slide without any text – you can explain orally what the audience should see
3. Make use of pointer. Don't gesticulate at slide unless there's only one thing on it. Use the pointer to highlight a word / figure / point. But be sparing and be steady.
4. Don't use figures as slide backgrounds
5. Use high contrast between background color and font color / size and make sure font is legible, both in size and font type and font color
6. Use very thick lines for graphs and figures – thin lines get lost on the projector and are difficult to see
7. Use complimentary colors – avoid using default settings as it makes it obvious you were too lazy to change the settings to ones more appropriate for your talk

C. Speaking style

1. Try not to be dependent on written notes. Practice to the point that you are comfortable without notes
2. Face your audience NOT the screen
3. Sound excited! This is your work and you should be excited to share it. You will have practiced a dozen times, but you'll still need to have varying vocal inflection to indicate important points and maintain audience interest
4. Cut down on lingo and jargon. Aim at college freshman (your students!). You know what they are capable of understanding. Assume this for your general audience
5. Watch out for verbal pauses and verbal ticks: um, so, err, etc.
6. Speak louder!