

# Academic poster presentations



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A poster is a visual communication tool. An effective poster will help you engage colleagues in conversation and get your main points across to many people at once.

An effective poster is:

- a source of information
- a conversation starter
- a summary of your work
- an advertisement of your work

## Tips for effective poster presentations

- Get your message across with effective visual displays of data and small blocks of supporting text. Think of your poster as an illustrated abstract.
- Tell readers why your work matters, what you did, what you found, and what you recommend.
- Avoid excessive focus on methods: it's results and implications that count!

## Overall appearance

- Your poster should be neat and uncluttered.
- Use white space to help organise sections.
- Assist “reader gravity” by guiding the readers’ eyes from the top to the bottom of your presentation in order of importance of content.

## Organisation

- Use headings to help readers find what they’re looking for: objective, results, conclusions, etc.
- Minimise text – use graphics (a picture really is worth a thousand words in conveying your meaning to your audience).
- Keep text in blocks of no more than 50 to 75 words – don’t create large blocks of prose.

## Text size

- All text should be large enough to read from 1 to 2 metres, including the text in figures.
- Title/heading should be larger, to attract attention.

## Colour

- Use colour cautiously. Dark letters on a light (or no) background are easiest to read.
- Stick to a theme of 2 to 3 colours.
- Avoid overly bright colours. They attract attention but wear out readers’ eyes.

## Contact details

Include your contact information. You want to be found – the reader should not have to look up anything to find you.

## Presentation

Prepare a 3 to 5 minute verbal explanation of your work. Some people will ask you to “walk me through your poster.” When making a presentation, don’t read the poster. Instead:

- give the big picture;
- explain why the problem is important, and
- use the graphics on your poster to illustrate and support your findings and recommendations.

## Handouts

A summary handout is something else you can refer to when talking to people about your work. Prepare a handout that provides a written record for readers. You want people to remember your work. You can include:

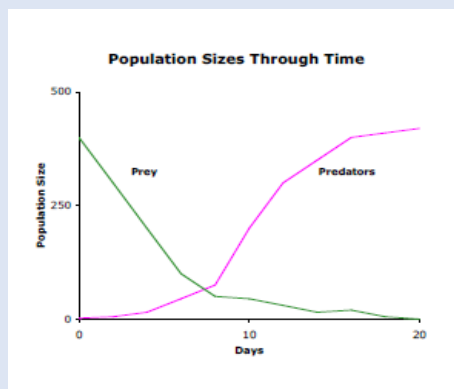
- a miniature version of your poster;
- more detailed graphics, tables, and prose, and
- complete contact information.

## Illustrations

- Clean graphs show data clearly!
- Focus on the relationships between elements on charts – exact values are not usually important.
- Avoid using coloured backgrounds, grid lines, detailed information on axes and data markers. This helps to keep the reader’s attention on the data.
- Label data directly, when possible. Legends force the reader to look back and forth to decode the graph.

### Example

Desired message: Prey decreased as predators increased.



Message is now loud and clear!

Resources for Poster Presenters

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