

## Poster Creation Good Practices

You can create an effective poster presentation in PowerPoint when you keep in mind some simple good design practices. This document offers some tips in preparing and designing your poster before you begin creating it. Two URLs are provided at the end where you can view examples that highlight some of these good design practices.

### Prepare

- A. Determine the space available** – The size of and shape of the space available for your poster will determine the size and shape of your poster (Fig. 1).

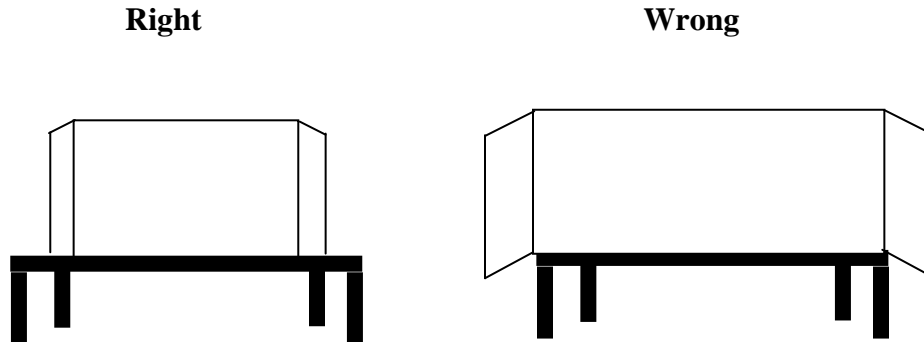


Fig. 1

- B. Consider how the poster will be viewed** - Will the viewer first encounter the poster at close range or from a distance? Where is the focal point of a tri-fold poster when first viewed from the left or right? Where should the focal point of your poster be (see Fig. 2)? Your audience will determine in approximately 3 seconds whether they will stay or go and then you have approximately 30 seconds to secure their attention. Attract and secure them with an attention getting photograph, diagram, quote, statement, etc.

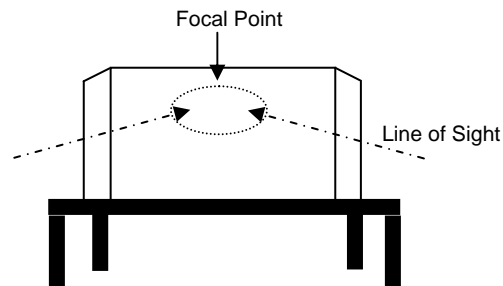


Fig. 2

- C. Know your audience** – If your audience is mixed, create content that is clear and includes explanations and examples. **All content does not need to be on your poster. Summarize information on the poster that can be understood by all viewers and provide handouts to take away that includes more technical details.**

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- D. Gather your content** - Organize your information into sections, e.g. title, introduction, problem, method, results, conclusion. Each section of information should include 3 elements, 1) a title, 2) a one sentence definition of the material contained in the section, 3) supporting material.

## Design

- A. Make several small scale sketches** – Thinking through the design will help you determine the sections you want to include and where you want to place them.
- B. Guide the eye of the viewer through the composition** – Create your poster with 3-4 columns to help your audience easily follow the direction of your information. You will need to consider object placement. If you have a lot of small objects use a device, such as a large color area, to tie the objects together. Blocks of text will act as a single element, especially when viewed from a distance. Consider the shape and position of these text blocks. Be careful not to position objects so they lead the viewer's eyes off the poster.
- C. Guide the eye with edges** – Align photographs, headings, text materials
- D. Guide the eye with color and contrast in concert with shape and size** - Use the following basic principles to guide your audience through your content.
1. Areas of brilliant color and high contrast move to the foreground. These are the areas of invitation – the first areas the viewer sees.
  2. Areas of low contrast and pale color move into the background and are viewed later.
  3. Help color blind member of your audience by making sure contrasts are high between bars of graphs, lines on charts and text on background. The most common form of color blindness effects red and green.
- E. Use color to highlight, separate, define or associate information** – Use subtle colors. Color should never compete with your content for attention.
- F. Use white space to direct attention to key elements** – You don't have to fill up every available space.
1. Leave at least 1 inch of white space around the outside edges and between columns.
  2. Leave more space between content sections and less between items within a section.
  3. Avoid placing text on the bottom 5-6 inches of the poster. It is difficult to read. However, it is acceptable to place an image in this space.

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### G. Create legible text – Following are good practices for text:

1. Avoid extremely long titles (e.g. *wrong* -The secret life of a Praying Mantis in the Tropical Forests of South America, *right* – The secret life of a Praying Mantis)
2. Avoid fonts below 24 point. Following are suggested sizes for text:
  - i. Main title - 90-100 point bold and readable from 10 feet away
  - ii. Body text – 28-32 point, sans serif are recommended (e.g. Ariel, Helvetica, etc.)
3. Avoid excessive use of different fonts, 2-3 are acceptable.
4. Avoid ornate fonts which may be difficult to read (e.g. *wrong* – *Script MS Bold*, *right* - Arial)
5. Avoid highlighting single words within the text (*wrong* - Now is the **time** to come....., *right* – **Now is the time** to come....)
6. Never use all capitals in text or titles (e.g. *wrong* – NEVER, *right* - Never)
7. Justify your text to the left
8. Use bullets or numbering for lists or steps
9. Use black text on a light background for maximum readability

### H. Create impact with graphics – Following are good practices for using images:

1. Illustrate your points with images whenever possible (e.g. replace extensive data with charts)
2. Never use an image that does not directly support the content – No Eye Candy!
3. Use images that are formatted correctly
  - i. Resolution should be 300 pixels per inch (ppi) for images and 675 for slides.
  - ii. File types can be JPG, GIF, TIFF, PNG (Tiff and PNG files can have a transparent background which may be desirable when placing over a colored background or grouped)
  - iii. Crop images to eliminate unnecessary information and to focus attention on significant details.
  - iv. Enlarge images to 5 x 7
  - v. Provide captions for your images
  - vi. Avoid using images from the Internet, when printing large they often look soft and have large pixels

To view examples of what to do and not do when creating a poster, go to the following URLs:

- <http://www.emich.edu/training/poster/>
- [http://www.soe.uoguelph.ca/webfiles/agalvez/poster/poster\\_making/entry.htm](http://www.soe.uoguelph.ca/webfiles/agalvez/poster/poster_making/entry.htm)