

Poster Presentations

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Resources at <http://tughan.ca/seminars>

Initial Planning:

1. First of all, assuming you know what you're going to present on, you need to know the requirements for the poster itself, as well as what else you're expected to bring
 - a. dimensions (often **36x48** or 36x56 ... also, landscape or portrait orientation)
 - b. materials (do they want it laminated, specific types of paper, coloured or not?)
 - c. how it's to be attached to the board or whatever (bring your own pins, velcro, ...)
 - d. how you're going to get it there (does it fit in the carry-on?)
 - e. do you need to / are you allowed to bring handouts or business cards?
2. General concepts
 - a. Visibility: your poster should be legible from at least 2m away.
 - b. Clarity: a poster is not a re-creation of your paper (like slides should not be a recreation of your presentation content) – hit the high points!
 - c. White space: visually, what you don't include is as important as what you do
 - d. Images / charts / graphs: Yes, please (provided they're relevant, of course)
 - e. References: they don't have to be big, but should probably still be there if needed
 - f. Colour: It's nice to have, and can make a difference, but be aware of the \$ involved
 - g. Common sections (depending of the type of thing you're presenting)
 - Purpose / Problem / Scope
 - Background
 - Research Strategy / methodology
 - Results / Key Findings
 - Recommendations and Conclusions
 - References and Acknowledgements
3. Last but not least, check on your options for printing
 - a. In-house? GIS Lab in the Library, for around \$40 for 3x4ft.
 - b. Kinkos: \$0.99 per square foot black and white, \$9 per square foot colour
 - c. Before you do something wider than 36" in both dimensions, make sure you can get it printed somewhere (commercial printers, online options)
 - d. Also, you will want to check with your printer to see if they can do "full bleed" printing (colour right to the edge of the paper). Otherwise, you'll need to leave margins around the outside.

Planning on Paper:

- Get all your textual content, images, charts and graphs, etc. together
- Ideally, sketch out a few layouts on paper
 - logical / visual flow is usually top to bottom, left to right, etc.
 - people are accustomed to reading columns in order (down then across)
 - some sense of visual rhythm is helpful (matching charts/images)
 - you may not yet have a sense of how much space things will take up, but take a stab at a few arrangements now; it will make things easier than trying to play on the screen

On To PowerPoint: The Textbox, Shape, and Table Approach

- Start with a blank slide by right clicking the thumbnail to the right and choosing the “Blank” layout.
- Design > Page Setup : Set the Width and Height from the requirements (48” wide, 36” high)
- View > Gridlines (and Ruler? Depends if prefer to do it by “eye”)
- Text box approach
 - Insert > Text Box : Drag to insert space for your title, and type the title in. The title should be at least 72pt – and bigger if you can manage it – so resize it if you need to, center if you want. Bear in mind: 72 pt is 1” high – that’s not a lot from 10’ away. The title box will also hold your name(s) and institutional info, and maybe a logo.
 - Text boxes will enclose all of your blocks of text. You will set margins within each text box to provide white space. Set the text box to not auto-adjust to contents. Text headings should be 60pt or bigger; regular text should probably be at least 36pt, but bigger is better.
 - Set up one content box first, and get the width right depending on your number of columns (poster width divided by columns). Insert a sample heading and text. You may want to resize and adjust later, but you want a general sense of where columns will be and so on. Generally, one text box per column should be fine (as well as the ones for the title and maybe the footer if you’re putting references there).
 - Copy the text box and paste, then drag the new one over to your next column; repeat to get all three or four set up. Before going any further, get the size of your text boxes right, and make sure the columns are going to work the way you think they are.
 - While in the design stage, keep the text box borders (“lines”) turned on to make it easier to see where you’re working. You’ll want to remove them for printing.
 - Text box and columns: this approach starts the same way, but with only one text box in the content area. Use the text box columns setting to add columns, and then the content will fill in automatically. Less control, but maybe enough depending on your content.
 - Shapes and text boxes: you may prefer to use a shape (rounded rectangle, for example) for the header, and maybe for content blocks. These would work like the text boxes, except they usually have a border or a background colour. These are editable through the right-click “Format Shape” menu.
- Table Layout
 - Begin by inserting text boxes for your header and footer. Then add a one-row three-cell table to contain your content. Set the height of your cells manually, so that the table fills the space between header and footer. Set internal cell padding to provide white space, though you may want different amounts of padding in different cells. You can turn the borders on and off in the **Table Tools > Design > Borders** part of the ribbon.
- You can simply copy and paste charts and graphs from Excel
 - build and format them in Excel first, and get them looking exactly the way you want
 - remember to set colours (or not) depending on whether you're printing in colour
 - copy and paste into PowerPoint
 - resize it to fit your layout (column width, or whatever you're doing)
 - remember to check the font size for any text (axis numbers, labels, titles, legends, so on)
 - remember that a caption or title is absolutely necessary
- You can also insert images, as long as you make sure the image is of high enough quality (dpi) – you're better to get something huge and scale it down than to try to stretch something smaller. Again, fit it into your general layout and “visual rhythm”

On to PowerPoint: The Slide Master Approach

1. Switch to Slide Master view, and set the slide dimensions in **Slide Master > Page Setup** (48x36).
2. Click anywhere in the first slide, and set the grid to .5 inches
3. In the first (top) slide master, and using the home ribbon tab
 - a. Title area
 - Right click on the “shape” and choose “format shape”
 1. Text box: internal margins to .5 inches
 2. fill: solid (a dark colour – I used dark blue)
 - Set the title bar text to a light colour (I used white)
 - Change the title font size to 96pt
 - b. Body area
 - Click on the text, and change the colour to your dark colour and font size to 60pt
 - Click on the little arrow in the paragraph section
 1. Set indentation for before text to 0, special to none
 2. Set spacing before paragraph to 0, after to 18pt
 - c. Now, using the Slide Master tab, **insert a new layout** (don’t keep working on that top slide master, or nothing you do will be saved; the top one is for general formatting only)
 - Rename the layout to “Poster Presentation”
 - Click on the layout, and move and resize the title area so that it’s 100% width and in the top corners of the slide (you can right-click in it and use “size and position” as well). If your printer does not do “full bleed” printing, leave a margin around your content (1”); this will alter some of the measurements below slightly as well.
 - In the ribbon, insert a placeholder for your references and acknowledgements
 1. Move it down to the bottom of the slide, and stretch it to full width
 2. Set the font colour and size (28pt)
 - In the ribbon, insert a placeholder for your first column
 1. Right-click in it and set size and position: width = 16 inches
 2. Move it to the far left, and stretch it vertically so that it meets the footer
 3. Set the font colour and size (60pt)
 - Click on the edge of the placeholder to select it, then copy and paste
 1. Move the new placeholder to the right of your first column
 2. Repeat to add your last placeholder (third column)
 - d. If you like, you can repeat this with 12 inch columns, to get a four column layout option
 - e. You can also delete all but one of the pre-existing layouts if you want
4. **Switch back to normal view** (click the big red “X” in the slide master ribbon).
 - a. Change the layout of your current slide – pick the one you just made
 - b. The title will be the right size, but your names (below that) should be smaller (72?). You may also include institutional information below that, smaller still (60?).
 - c. You can type content in the columns – remember that we set the font size at 60pt for the headings – regular body text should be 32pt. Acknowledgements and references can be smaller (28?)
 - d. If you are copying and pasting graphics or images, that works well. Inserting them, though, can sometimes cause your placeholders to disappear, while copying and pasting does not (for some reason). To get past this, insert a new slide, and insert your graphics into it, then copy and paste them into your poster. You may want charts, graphics, or logos for instance.

And you thought you were done ...

- export the poster as a PDF to check on the clarity of the graphics and so on
- print the poster on an 8.5 x 11 sheet (scale to fit page) to check on same
 - if you can't read it easily, then you need to go back and make the text bigger
- this would also be a good time to have a friend or two read it over
 - first of all, just for proofreading purposes
 - good to get people who don't know what you're talking about, to see if they can still follow
- most printers will deal best with PDF files, so always take a pdf version. They may have PowerPoint or Publisher or whatever as well, but don't bet on it.

Changing from Metric to Imperial (cm to inches) in Windows

- Not a PowerPoint thing, really, but a windows thing, so I'm tacking it on down here.
- Control Panel > Regional (it's Regional something, different for each version of windows)
- Choose English(US) for inches, English(Canada) for cm.
- Remember to change it back if you don't want inches forever.

Useful links:

Swathmore College: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurin1/posteradvice.htm>

PhD Posters Gallery: <http://phdposters.com/gallery.php>

flickr Poster Sessions: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/368476@N21/pool/>

Google Images "Poster Presentation": <http://images.google.com/images?q=poster+presentation>