Developing a Winning Poster Presentation

Adapted from a presentation given by Hiatt Career Center, Brandeis University
Table of Contents

• Why Present?
• Poster Specifications
• What’s Your Story?
• Goals of Experiential Learning
• Aspects of Effective Poster Presentations
Poster presentations are a great opportunity for undergraduates to:

• Gain experience in presenting your work in a formal setting
• Receive feedback from faculty and peers
• Share ideas and learn from other students
• Enhance your resume
Posters:

- A large printed poster
- Mounted to a tri-fold board (or another method depending on the conference guidelines)
- 48” x 36”
- White or black
- Project Title
  - Name
  - Year
  - Contact Info
Posters: What’s your story?

• What did you do?
  • Why interesting? Important?

• But not ONLY about what you did
  • Outcomes? Who was affected?
  • Reflection? How were *you* affected?
  • Helpful information/advice to share with others?
  • Why would others want to know about this?
When creating your poster, remember Experiential Learning is:

1. An Intellectual Challenge
   • Tackle real-world problems for which there are no answers in the back of the book.
   • Challenge your powers of observation, analysis and creative thinking.
   • Test theories against the concrete; experience, create, and prove new theories.
Goals of Experiential Learning

When creating your poster, remember Experiential Learning is:

2. A Practical Experience
   • Explore the world of a professional in the field.
   • Ask yourself, “Is this field the right fit for me?”
   • Sharpen applications for graduate school and employment by documenting skills and experience.
Goals of Experiential Learning

When creating your poster, remember Experiential Learning is:

3. Opportunity for Personal Growth
   • Develop skills to work in groups or independently.
   • Appreciate differences in learning style, values, and world view.
   • Practice taking informed risks, and learn from mistakes as well as successes.
Make an Outline:

- Begin to make a mental outline
  - What journey do you want people to take?
- What were the biggest issues?
- ...Unexpected results?
- ...Proudest achievements?
- ...Lessons learned?
- ...Most significant insights?
- What are your next steps and future plans?
Effective Posters:

- Readable
- Legible
- Well-Organized
- Succinct
Effective Presentations: Readable

• Limited time to convey your message to your audience
  • May have less than 3 minutes per person
  • What are your most important points?
• Choose one memorable message
• Avoid grammar & punctuation mistakes
• Do the topics resonate with the audience?
  • Why should they know this?
  • The “grandmother” rule: Would she understand it?
Spatial organization makes the difference between reaching 95% rather than 5% of the audience.

- Audience shouldn’t have to hunt for main idea/takeaways
- Space in-between sections; Visually neat
- Good flow of logic
- Impactful, short titles
  - Avoid jargon
  - Borders or mounting sections of text help
Effective Presentations: Succinct

- Don’t overwhelm them, entice them!
  - Think of 1-2 sentences to say to everyone
  - What are your most important points? Your one memorable message?
- Keywords and section headings that make an impact
- Pictures and graphs instead of paragraphs
Keep in Mind...

- Show, don’t tell
  - Less (text) is more
  - Bullet points
- Photos & figures speak volumes and break up sections
- Use of color (if you can)
  - Printing
  - Border/mounting
Suggested Headings/Sections:

May differ depending on the type of poster (Science Research vs. others)

- Personalized Titles
- Methods
- Outcomes
- Research Topic/Problem
- Organization/Lab

- Challenges
- Successes
- Lessons Learned
- Highlights of the Experience
- Next Steps… where is this taking you?
Finalizing your Presentation

- Proofread!
- Get feedback from friends or mentors before printing
  - Clear & easy to understand?
  - Clean & well designed?
  - Memorable message?

- Know what you most want to tell people
  - 1-2 sentence version; 2-3 minute version
  - Prepare a handout that summarizes the poster and your findings
During your Presentation

• Dress professionally and wear comfortable shoes since you will likely be standing for a long period of time.
• Your body language should be open and inviting for people to stop when they walk by.
• Be sure to speak loudly enough to be heard, slow enough that you think your are speaking too slowly, and without fillers like “um,” “uh,” “like,” “you know,” and “okay.”