

Poster Printing Guide for Students

Using Student Computing Services Large Format Printer

Introduction

Printing to the SCS Poster Printer in the SCS Lab is a service offered to SCS students at no charge. Because of the high cost of paper and ink, we need to take all reasonable steps to insure that the first print is acceptable. To that end, we have developed the following guidelines and procedures.

Only academic posters may be printed. If your poster is not in fulfillment of a class assignment or some other faculty-supported project, printing must be approved by an OTS professional.

Using an SCS Template for a Fast Start

The poster templates available on the SCS Resources page are preconfigured for the SCS DesignJet printer.

1. Open <http://www.towson.edu/scs> and click the **Printing** link in the yellow area on the right.
2. Click **Large Format Printing Templates** in the yellow box on the right. The available templates are all PowerPoint files. PowerPoint makes a fairly flexible design and layout tool for large documents, and using a template will allow you to bypass the set-up tedium and start creating your masterpiece right away!

If you develop your poster in Publisher, Word or some other application, SCS recommends you use Adobe Acrobat (available on selected computers in the SCS Lab) to convert to PDF format prior to printing. If a poster in a format other than PowerPoint does not print satisfactorily the first time, SCS reserves the right to postpone reprinting until a professional staff member can be consulted.

If you want to mount your poster on a presentation board, acquire the board before you create the poster so that you can size your document appropriately. A popular (and economical) three-panel presentation board composed of a 24"x36" center panel and two 12"x36" side panels is available at the University Store (UU) and local office supply shops. The SCS Web site includes a template for this type of board.

Develop Your Poster

A Worthy Width: The SCS DesignJet prints to a 24-inch, 36-inch, or 44-inch wide roll of paper; posters narrower than 24 inches will require trimming. SCS is not specially equipped for large-format trimming, but we can help you add guides to your poster for manual trimming. If you use an SCS template or otherwise set your width to any of the above widths, trimming will be unnecessary.

Breathing Room for the Eyes: Regardless of its size, a page filled to overflowing with text content is hard on the eyes. Good design makes effective use of **white space**, the *empty* areas of the page. The following general steps may serve as a useful guide:

1. Edit your text down to the essential information *before* composing your poster. The longer argument is not necessarily the stronger argument. Further, eleventh-hour text edits can wreak havoc with an otherwise solid design.
2. Set page margins to at least one inch. Margins of less than one inch will make your poster look overcrowded and you audience feel claustrophobic.
3. Leave at least one inch of space between columns of text.
4. If possible, increase the line spacing (leading) of your text. Often, smaller text with greater line spacing is easier to read the larger text with lesser line spacing. Say *that* ten times fast!

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Contrast is King: If the color of your text is similar to the color of the background on which you place it, your text may be difficult to read. Contrast—the difference between the lightest and darkest areas—is an important consideration. As a rule, if your text is difficult to read on your computer monitor, it will be even more so on paper.

Hi Res, It's Nice to See You: An image's resolution value is a measure of the amount of detail in the image. As a rule, the higher the resolution, the greater the available detail, the higher the image quality. High resolution (hi-res) images usually make for better looking posters. When selecting images, look for resolution values in the 200-300 dpi range. Images copied from Web pages—typically 72-75 dpi—may appear jagged and fuzzy when enlarged. Many clipart images, such as those available via PowerPoint's Insert> Pictures menu, are resolution-independent and will remain sharp at any size.

Call Ahead; We've Got Some Good Ones: Poster printing in the SCS Lab may only be done with staff assistance. For your own convenience, we recommend that you make a 30-minute appointment to print your poster by sending an email message to scs@towson.edu or by stopping by the SCS Computer Lab (CK-35). Many SCS staffers are well prepared to assist you.

Some Like it Dry: The SCS poster printer uses inkjet technology. Consequently, your poster will be particularly susceptible to the ravages of moisture. To play it safe, consider bringing a large plastic bag (e.g., trash or leaf bag) to your printing appointment so that you can safely transport your poster regardless of the weather conditions. Meet with an SCS Staffer

When you visit the SCS Lab (CK-35) to print, a staff member will preview your poster and run through a brief checklist to make sure:

- The printer is ready and there is adequate paper and ink for your job
- The dimensions of your poster are appropriate for the printer
- The dimensions of your poster are compatible with the presentation board on which you plan to mount the poster (if applicable)
- There is no critical content within the half-inch non-printing border region of the poster
- There are no graphical conflicts, such as obscured text or inadequate contrast between text and background.

Printing and the Aftermath

Once we have addressed any potential problems, SCS will print your poster from one of the computers at the Service Desk. Once printing stops, the poster will hang on the printer for a couple of minutes to allow the ink to dry before it cuts the print from the roll.

Patience is a virtue; be virtuous.

Once the printer cuts the page loose, SCS will *carefully* remove it from the output bin and lay it on a table for your review. From this point on, the poster is in your hands. Keep it dry, avoid folding or creasing it, and enjoy the larger-than-life presentation