Creating Better Poster Presentations

Larissa Gordon, MS-LIS, MEd MA
Academic Commons
Learning Goals

• Discuss current thinking about scientific posters
• Understand why posters are unique
• Determine characteristics of good & bad posters.
• Create your own effective posters
Why do so many scientific posters suck?
Example Poster #1

**ABSTRACT:**

One ignored benefit of space travel is a potential elimination of obesity, a chronic problem for a growing majority in many parts of the world. In theory, when an individual is in a condition of zero gravity, weight is eliminated. Indeed, in space one could conceivably follow ad libitum feeding and never even gain an ounce, and the only side effect would be the need to upgrade one’s stretchy pants (“exercise pants”). But because many diet schemes start as very good theories only to be found to be rather barmy, we tested our predecessor with a long-term experiment in a colony of Guinea pigs (Cavia porcellus) maintained on the International Space Station. Individuals were housed separately and given unlimited amounts of high-calorie food pellets. Fresh fruits and vegetables were not available in space, but were also not offered. After 2 years, we found that individuals, on average, weighed nothing. In addition to weighing nothing, no weight appeared to be gained over the duration of the protocol. If space continues to be gravity-free, and we believe that assumption is sound, we believe that sending the overweight — and those at risk for overweight — to space would be a testing cure.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The current obesity epidemic started in the early 1960s with the invention and proliferation of elastane and related stretchy fibers, which released wearers from the rigid constraints of clothes and permitted monthly weight gain without the need to buy new outfits. Indeed, exercise today for hundreds of millions of people involves only the act of wearing stretchy pants in public, presumably because the constraining pressure forces fat molecules to adopt a more compact tertiary structure (Xavier 1965).

Luckily, at the same time that fabrics became stretchy, the race to the moon between the United States and Russia yielded a useful fact: gravity in outer space is minimal to nonexistent. When gravity is zero, objects cease to have weight. Indeed, even astronomers and cosmologists had to secure themselves to their ships with seat belts and sticky boots. The potential application to weight loss was noted immediately, but at the time travel to space was prohibitively expensive and thus the issue was not seriously pursued. Now, however, multiple companies are developing cheap extra-terrestrial travel options for normal consumers, and potential travelers are also creating new ways to pay for products and services that they cannot actually afford. Together, these factors open the possibility that moving to space could cure overweight syndrome quickly and permanently for a large number of humans.

We studied this potential by following weight gain in Guinea pigs, known on Earth as fond of ad libitum feeding. Guinea pigs were long envisioned to be the “Guinea pigs” of space research, too, so they seemed like the obvious choice. Studies on humans are of course desirable, but we feel this current study will be critical in acquiring the attention of grant-writing agencies.

**RESULTS:**

Mean weight of pigs in space was 0.0000 +/- 0.0002 g. Some individuals weighed less than zero, some more, but these variations were due to reaction to the duct tape, we believe, which caused them to be alarmed, pushed briefly against the force plate in the balance. Individuals on the Earth, the control cohort, gained about 2.4 g/month (p = 0.0002). Males and females gained a similar amount of weight on Earth, but the main factor of effect was sex, and size at any point during the study was related to starting size (which was used as a covariate in the ANCOVA). Both Earth and space groups developed substantial deposits (double chins) and were lethargic at the conclusion of the study.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

Our view that weight and weight gain would be zero in space was confirmed. Although we have not replicated this experiment on larger animals or primates, we are confident that our result would be mirrored in other model organisms. We are currently in the process of obtaining necessary human trial permits, and should have our planned experiment initiated within 8 years, pending expedited review by local and Federal IRBs.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

I am grateful for generous support from the National Research Foundation, Black Hole Diet Plans, and the High Fructose Sugar Association. Transport rights were funded by SPACE-EXES, the consortium of wives divorced from instantly wealthy space-flight start-ups. I am also grateful for comments on early drafts by Marsha Athletic Club, Corpus Christi, USA. Finally, sincere thanks to the Cat Foundation for generously donating animal care after the conclusion of the study.

**LITERATURE CITED:**


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http://colinperrington.com/tips/academic/posterdesign
Example Poster #2

Towards a synthetic synthesis of theoretical theory:
application perspectives on the worst academic poster ever created

Researcher Number One, Researcher Number Two, Researcher Number Three, Researcher Number Four, and Researcher Number Five

1 Research Center, University of Somewhere; 2 A Department, University of Somewhere Else

Abstract

Here is some text for this academic poster, indicating an essential fact, followed by yet more words. As an additional message occurs here, furthering the overall argument that is being made, there is some text for this academic poster, indicating an essential fact, followed by yet more words. As an additional message occurs here, furthering the overall argument that is being made. Here is some text for this academic poster, indicating an essential fact, followed by yet more words. As an additional message occurs here, furthering the overall argument that is being made. Here is some text for this academic poster, indicating an essential fact, followed by yet more words. As an additional message occurs here, furthering the overall argument that is being made. Here is some text for this academic poster, indicating an essential fact, followed by yet more words. As an additional message occurs here, furthering the overall argument that is being made.

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Why do many scientific posters suck?

“...researchers often slap posters together at the last minute instead of thinking about the best ways to deliver their message and engage their audience.”

"Too often, conference posters look like a scholarly journal barfed up one of its publications and posted it on the wall"
Why posters?

How are they special?
1) Visual Medium

2) Facilitates Discussion

This presents some important challenges!
The relationship between disgust levels and sexual behaviors as moderated by self-perceived pathogen exposure

Jessica K. Hay, Graham Albert, Zeynep Senveii, Steven Aronchick, Carolyn R. Hodges-Simeon

INTRO
- Behavioral Immune System
  - Works to avoid pathogen first, rather than fighting infection after
  - Environmental inputs should influence disgust sensitivity

METHODS
- N = 322 (♂160, ♀162)
- Perceived pathogen exposure, national disease prevalence (OurWorldInData.org), TDOS (disgust), SOI-R (sociosexuality)

RESULTS
- Structural Equation Modeling

DISCUSSION
- Further support of the Behavioral Immune System
- Disgust sensitivity is influenced by environmental inputs, specifically self-reported environmental pathogen
- Disgust is one mechanism which restricts sociosexual behavior, possibly to prevent infection

As environmental pathogen load increases, so does sexual disgust. This is associated with more restricted casual sex attitudes and behaviors.

Other Background Info
- ↑ Environmental harshness = ↓ disgust
- ↑ Self-report health = ↓ disgust
- ↑ Sexual disgust = ↓ short-term mating strategy
- ↑ Disease threat = ↓ short-term mating, ↓ future promiscuity, ↑ long-term mating

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<th>SE</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td>.42</td>
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<td>Behavior</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.19</td>
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</table>

Structural Equation Model Fit Indices
- χ² (201) = 566.88, p < .0001, SRMR = .12, RMSEA = .08, CFI = .88, TLI = .863

Limitations
- Self-reported environmental pathogen load
- Disease prevalence data at a national level
- mTurk participants still not necessarily representative
- What other factors influence variation in disgust sensitivity?
There's a movement for better posters at science conferences. But are they really better? And how does poster push relate to the ongoing campaign for open science?
Brief, Basic, but Useful Poster Creation Guides from the Disciplinary Literature

How to Design an Outstanding Poster
The Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) Journal, 2018, DOI: 10.1111/febs.14420

Poster Creation Guidelines and Tips for Success
Nursing, 2017. DOI: 10.1097/01.NURSE.0000512875.68515.8e

Successful Design and Delivery of Professional Poster

Presentations: Billboard Sciences
Nature, 2012, DOI: 10.1038/nj7387-113a

Ten Simple Rules for a Good Poster Presentation
PLoS Computational Biology, 2007, DOI: 10.1371/journal.pcbi.0030102
Template 2

The title of your poster should be very short

Martin H. Trauth
University of Potsdam, Institute of Geosciences, trauth@uni-potsdam.de

1–Questions
Here you briefly write down which questions you would like to address. You can also include 1–2 reference here, but then only in the form Trauth et al. (Science, 2005), so no detailed bibliography. It is sufficient to mention the first author, the journal and the year of publication.

2–Answers
Here you can write down your answers, your conclusions, perhaps in the form of several points. This should not be very detailed, rather in the form of statements. If you have already published this in the form of a paper, then you can insert the reference in the form as under Questions.

3–Study Area
You can show a geographic and a geologic map of your study area. Again, make sure that you use similar colors as in the other graphics. This geologic map uses yellow, brown and olive green, but there are also special color compilations that are especially suitable for color-blind people. Again you should use references here citing the source of the geologic map. Cite these geologic reports and papers in a short form, as already said in the Questions section, avoid a long reference list.

4A–Data 1
Here you can show field photos and graphics. Do not use too many different colors, e.g. by using ready-for-use color compilations of graphics software.

4B–Data 2
Show the data and photos here and explain them. Never show tables and equations on posters. Use a few different colors only. Avoid too much text and graphics.

4C–Data 3
Another data graph with interpretation. Again use non-serif fonts, >1 pt line width and good colors. This poster has a dark background that requires a lot of ink to print. A white background can also be very nice. This poster also works if the boxes around text and graphics are deleted. The poster is 2 m x 1 m large, the font of the text is 62 pt Helvetica Light for the captions, 60 pt for the headers and authors, 140 pt for the title of the poster. The QR code links the poster with my webpage.

http://141.89.112.21/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/poster_template_trauth_1_vs5.png
Title pitched at general audience that provides conclusion or at least hints at something interesting

Colin B. Purrington, Department of Posterology, Hudson University

Introduction

Three sentences max.

Persuade reader you have novel, interesting question(s) and hypothesis. Resist urge to use all the white space.

Materials and methods

Three sentences max.

If viewer truly wants to know gruesome details, they’ll ask or email you. Sometimes adding a pic is good.

Results

Highlight your LARGE photographs, charts, maps, or in this central arena.

Don’t include every graphic you’ve made that relates to project. Choose one. Or two. And separate graphics with plenty of white space.

[if you have just one or two simple graphics, viewers will be drawn to explore them. If you have too many or they are too complicated, they will be repelled.]

Annotate graphics with arrows and callout boxes so that viewer is visually led through how hypothesis is addressed. The goal is to enable viewers to understand the logic behind your conclusions without you needing to be there.

Keep font size of all text (even graph labels) as big or bigger than in rest of poster.

Conclusions

Explain why outcome is interesting. Don’t assume it’s obvious. Three sentences max.

Maybe include a sentence about what you plan to do next.

As for Introduction, don’t feel like you need to fill the entire box.

I.e., if you retain a lot of white space you will attract more viewers. Seriously.

Literature cited


Acknowledgments

Be brief.

Further information

Please see https://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design for more templates and tips. I’m at colinpurrington@gmail.com if you have a question or comment.
Details varied, but every one of these posters had at least:

A) White space with no content
B) A short punchy title
C) An “introduction” box
D) Multiple useful and impactful visuals
E) Limited text. Less is more
F) Organization is clear to the reader
G) Landscape format
Follow standard good writing practices.

• Determine your main message

• Think about your audience

• Consider why you are presenting this poster
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different parts of poster don't line up</th>
<th>Boxes within boxes</th>
<th>Zigzag reading order</th>
<th>More than three typefaces</th>
<th>Long-winded title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gradient fills in coloured boxes</td>
<td>Big blocks of text</td>
<td>Photographic background</td>
<td>Unlabelled error bars on graphs</td>
<td>Pixelated pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More than five colours</strong></td>
<td>Institutional logos bookending title</td>
<td>Free space</td>
<td><strong>ALL CAPS</strong></td>
<td>Text with shadows, outlines, or bevels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Underlined text</td>
<td><strong>Comic Sans</strong></td>
<td>3-D graphs</td>
<td>Checking tablet or phone during presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables showing data that could be in a graph</td>
<td>Poster does not fit on poster board</td>
<td><strong>Comic Sans (it's that annoying)</strong></td>
<td>Objects almost touching or overlapping</td>
<td>Tiny, unreadable types</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bad Poster Bingo**

By Zen Faulkes

betterposters.blogspot.com

Inspired by: http://www.monicametzler.com/bad-presentation-bingo/
A few good general formatting practices

• “Hierarchy” indicates significance.

• Limit both color and font choices

• Text in all capitals is hard to read

• Left aligned text is easier to read
Images, charts, and tables

- Posters = an emphasis on the visual.
- Images should reflect the poster’s main message
- Keep charts and graphs simple!
https://www.echorivera.com/blog/anna-clemens-dataviz-presentations
Tools to make a poster with

• PowerPoint
• Adobe Illustrator
• Inkscape
Presentation Tips

- Don’t read your poster

- Your poster is your presentation visual, use it as such.

- Practice

- Find out details about how your poster will be displayed

- Supplement the content on your poster.

- Advertise your poster

- Think about how to transport your posters

- Dress to match your poster (#extra)
Help from the Academic Commons

Graphics & Medical Illustration

- Medical and general illustrations and schematics
- Graphic design: Brochures, invitations and programs
- Poster, title and banner design
  - Designing Your Research Poster: Tips and Best Practices
  - Jefferson research poster templates (from Creative Services)

Office for Professional Writing, Publishing & Communication

We provide support to Center City and East Falls faculty and other members of the Jefferson community who are writing for publication or developing conference presentations. Consult the office for free assistance at any stage of the writing, publishing, or presentation development process.

We can support you in three main ways:

- Individual Consultations
- Group Consultations
- Workshops
Poster Templates

• Jefferson Templates: http://creative.jefferson.edu/templates/research-poster/

• Better Poster Templates: https://osf.io/6ua4k/

• Purrington’s Templates: https://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design/

• Butter Poster: https://derekcrowe.net/butterposter
Want more in-depth information?

**#SCIFUND CHALLENGE**

**ACADEMIC POSTERS**

Creating posters that stand out from the crowd and get you noticed

- **Part 0: Introduction**
- **Part 1: What You’ll Need**
- **Part 2: The Real Purpose of Your Academic Poster**
- **Part 3: Getting Started with the Software**
- **Part 4: Planning Your Poster Layout**
Key Takeaways

• Creating a “good” academic poster should involve careful thought and consideration of your messages and goals.

• Posters are a visual medium, and should be created according to good visual design principles.

• Posters are designed to facilitate discussion and to be part of a carefully crafted presentation.
Assignment Details

Option 1: Create a first draft of an academic poster based on an article that you have written or that you found/read for a class.

Option 2: Find and thoroughly evaluate 2 academic posters. You could also choose to evaluate a poster that you created before this workshop.

Pay special attention to criteria from slides 15, 16, 18, & 19.

If you need sample articles or posters remember that the Jefferson Digital Commons has many you can use for this assignment. https://jdc.jefferson.edu/