

# Preparing Effective Posters

(from Society for Neuroscience:

[http://www.sfn.org/content/Meetings\\_Events/AnnualMeeting2/Resources/SpeakerResources/PreparingEffectivePosters/preparing.html](http://www.sfn.org/content/Meetings_Events/AnnualMeeting2/Resources/SpeakerResources/PreparingEffectivePosters/preparing.html)

A poster should be self-contained and self-explanatory, allowing different viewers to proceed on their own while leaving the author free to discuss points raised in inquiry. The poster session offers a more intimate forum for discussion than the slide presentation, but discussion becomes difficult if the author is obliged to devote most of the time explaining the poster to a succession of viewers. Remember that the time spent at each poster figure is determined by the viewer, not the author, as in the case of slide presentations. An effective poster is neither a page-by-page printout of a journal paper nor a slide show, but balances figures and text.

## Before the Meeting

### Planning and Layout

Poster boards are 5'10" (1.75 m) wide and 3'10" (1.15 m) high. For effective use of this space, consider organizing illustrations and text using a grid plan. Arrange materials in columns rather than rows. It is easier for viewers to scan a poster by moving systematically along it rather than by zig-zagging back and forth in front of it. Place your most significant findings at eye level immediately below the title bar, and the supporting data and/or text in the lower panels.

For conventional multi-panel posters, five columns can be formed using poster elements printed on 11" wide paper (or 2930 cm wide A4 or B5 paper) with suitable spacing or borders. Materials may be mounted on colored poster board. You may want to group logically consistent sections or columns of the poster on backgrounds of the same color. Background colors should be muted; shades of gray are also effective.

The increasing availability of 36"- and 54"-wide inkjet printers and page-layout software permits economical production of effective and attractive posters on a single sheet that can be transported to the meeting in a poster tube. Use line borders to separate areas.

### Title

Prepare a banner for the top of the poster indicating the abstract title, author(s) and affiliation(s), and session number of the abstract. Lettering should be at least one inch high.

### Illustrations

Figures should be designed to be viewed from a distance and should use clear, visible graphics and large type. Color can be effective if used sparingly; use saturated dark colors on white or pale backgrounds and rich, light colors on dark backgrounds. Although each figure should illustrate no more than one or two major points, figures need not be simple. The main points should be clear without extended viewing, but detail can be included for the aficionado. The sequence of illustrations should be indicated with numbers or letters at least one inch high. (Omit "Fig." or "Figure"; it is unnecessary and occupies too much space.)

### Text

Each figure or table should have a heading of one or two lines in very large type stating the "take-home" message. Additional essential information should be provided below in a legend set in 16 point or larger type.

Minimize narrative. Text that would normally appear in the body (Results and Discussion) of a manuscript can be integrated in figure legends. It should describe concisely not only the content of the figure but also the conclusions that are derived. Details of methodology should be brief and should be placed at the end of each legend.

Use large type in short, separated paragraphs with unjustified (ragged right) margins. Numbered or bulleted lists are effective ways to convey a series of points. Do not set entire paragraphs in uppercase (all capitals) or boldface type. An introduction should be placed at the upper left and a conclusion at the lower right, both in large type. It is rarely necessary to post a copy of the abstract.