

Guidelines for Poster Presentations

The most important thing for you to remember as you consider these guidelines is that for UWill Discover, posters will not be displayed in hard copy, and therefore, should not be printed. Your poster will be digitally projected for others to see the results of your research or creative work.

A very important part of our conference, poster sessions have advantages over traditional oral sessions including:

- Posters encourage longer and more meaningful interaction between presenters and audience members
- Posters enable audience members to assimilate larger amounts of information than can be communicated orally
- Posters allow the presenter to easily distribute supplemental materials

The Mechanics

Size. Posters should be made to display visually when they are projected. Assume a projection area that is rectangular, and approximately 6' 6" (2 meters) high, by 8' (2.5 meters) wide.

Display. We will provide projectors, laptops, and a projection surface. You should provide the poster via at least two media: save it on a thumb drive, and if possible, email it to yourself, or save it in a cloud computing repository such as Dropbox.

Designing and Preparing Your Poster

Planning Your Poster. A poster should emphasize ONE key idea and clearly demonstrate it. Choose the key idea you want to focus on and then decide on how you can best support it through visual (and, secondarily, textual) means.

Start early, especially if you have never done a poster before.

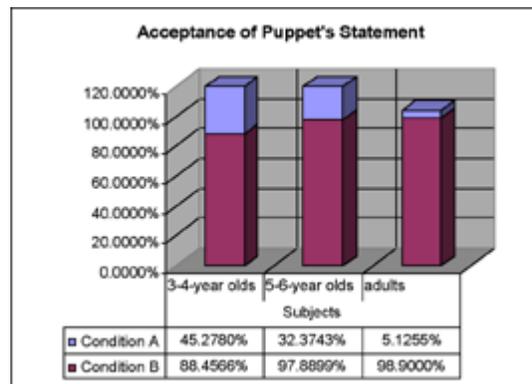
Presenters should create poster presentations on Powerpoint or in Word. If you use Powerpoint, customize the dimensions in Page Setup. You can choose to display the grid on the screen to help you with layout. In either Word or PowerPoint, you will want to make sure you plan your dimensions and layout accordingly. Also if you use colorful background, choose one solid color for the entire poster or different colors for each of the main sections.

Layout. Divide the contents of your poster into appropriate sections, e.g.:

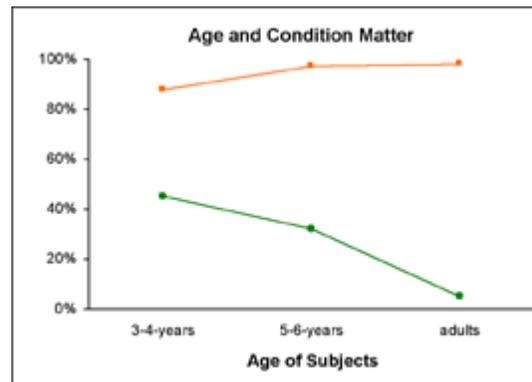
- Header: including title, author, and the UWill Discover logo (see webpage).
- Your abstract, which will include the five steps you submitted originally: the importance of the work; the state of knowledge in the field; the research question; the methodology; and the findings.
- You may want to create separate sections for Methodology, Data, and Findings or results
- Conclusions or concluding questions

Utilize the visual medium. As much as possible, use visual aids rather than text to communicate ideas. Use graphs, charts and/or tables (color if possible) to show results. Color is an important tool for making your poster visually interesting and for presenting concepts strategically.

Charts and Figures. Focus on relationships, not exact values. Eliminate non-essential elements in charts and figures (e.g., grid lines, tick marks on the axes, background colors, extra digits after the decimal, labels, 3D displays, etc.). The following examples, taken from the LSA website, illustrate these guidelines. The first example below demonstrates what not to do when formatting a figure. The graphics and inclusion of non-essential information make it difficult to read at a glance.



In the second example the trends are clear and easy to read:



Spacing and Sequence. Use empty space strategically. Avoid clutter. Filling all available space will make your poster overwhelming to the reader. Aim for at least a one-inch margin around the border of the poster and the blocks of text and graphs; this empty space frames the text. Keep the blocks of text small.

Make sure the sequence is clear and logical. Some templates are available online from poster printing companies. A three- to four-column layout is helpful. Put the most important findings towards the center and in the top right and bottom left corners.

Font. Use clear, simple, dark fonts for all text. Avoid overuse of capitals, italics, underlining and elaborate or script fonts. Choose a font that is easy to read. Minimize the number of fonts used (e.g., do not use one font for headings, another for the text, another for the title, yet another for graph labels, and so on). It is often recommended that headings be in a sans serif font (like Arial or Helvetica), and text in a serif font (like Times New Roman or Times). However, you can use either throughout. Choose the text color in accordance with the background color.

The title should be legible from at least 20 feet away. The headings and text should be legible to someone standing 10-15 feet away. This means selecting the following (general) font sizes:

- Title (first line(s)): 80-120 (bold, can be all-caps, but not name(s) of author(s))
- Title (affiliation, contact info): 60-80 (bold)
- Headings: 50-70 (bold, can be all-caps)
- Text: 24-36 (certainly no smaller than 18)
- Acknowledgements: 18-28
- References: 18-28

Content. Be concise with your written material. Save elaborative points for verbal discussion and interaction with viewers. For conclusions, focus on a central finding that lends itself to informal discussion. Bullet points are more effective than long sentences. However, consider including a sentence under each graph as a caption summarizing the results presented. Use active, not passive, voice.

Color. Choose a muted background color. Avoid especially bright colors or too many colors. Two or three colors are usually enough. A splash of color here and there, perhaps highlighting central findings or results, will make your poster stand out. If you need to use color in the figures or illustrations, coordinate these colors with the main colors. Avoid bitmap pattern backgrounds, since they lose their clarity when printed on a poster.

Handouts. It is a good idea to make a handout summarizing your presentation, so that people have something to take with them to remember you and your work. On the handout, include your contact information, the key points of your work, and a few important sources. It is also advisable to have copies of your paper at hand to give to anyone who may have an interest.

Presenting Your Poster

During your presentation, other posters may be on display within your area. Audience members are free to move from one poster to another, stopping briefly, and then continuing on.

Some presenters like to let people take a look for a few seconds before saying anything. Others like to offer a walk-through once someone begins looking at the poster. Do what you feel comfortable with and what you think is best for the audience at hand. Avoid long conversations with individuals, especially concerning topics other than your poster, since this discourages others from learning about your work and makes you seem inaccessible.

Your Mini-TED Talk. To begin your presentation, play your Mini-TED Talk and then display your poster. Then let the audience member ask questions and read the poster and handout. You should be as prepared as if you were going to give an oral presentation, but the goal is to have a more informal back-and-forth exchange. Be prepared to explain certain elements in more or less detail, depending on peoples' questions and interest. As you are talking to one person or one group of people, other people may join the crowd or formulate questions. Make eye contact with them and work in a sentence or two referring to material they may have missed. Make sure everyone gets a handout.

Be available. Stay in your presentation area for at least the hour of your scheduled time, but give people time and space to view your materials.

Additional materials. Have a notepad handy when presenting at your poster session. It may be helpful in elaborating on your findings, or for taking contact information of people interested in your research.

Get to know your audience. Find out who they are and what they're working on. You may make a valuable contact with someone who shares your research interests.

Setting up your poster

Allow time for setup. Please arrive 15-30 minutes early to the poster session so that you can take the time to confirm online access to the material you need.

Additional Resources

We have drawn from the following resources in creating the guidelines. You may want to consult them for more ideas:

- Linguistics Society of America - <http://www.lsadc.org/info/meet-poster.cfm>
- IGALA 3 - [Poster](#)
- International Studies Association - [ISA Poster Guidelines](#)
- Guidelines for Preparing AAA Posters - [American Anthropological Association Poster Guidelines](#)
- American Political Science Association - [Successful Poster Sessions: Some Guidelines](#)
- International Studies Association (Marilyn A. Levine) - [Creating Posters for Humanities and Social Sciences](#)
- Jeff Radel - [Designing Effective Posters](#)