

**Poster Making 101:
Creating a Presentation Poster**

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OVERVIEW

This document reviews the basic principles of designing a presentation poster. It assumes that you have decided on a topic and considered what content you would like to include on your poster.

AUDIENCE

As an author, you could provide a novel's worth of information. Identifying your audience lets you gauge how much detail to include. Conference posters tend to require simplified content to apply to a broader audience. However, make your content more specific when presenting to a targeted audience.

PRODUCTION TIME

Ideally, you should allow 3-6 weeks to develop your poster.

TIME	TASK	TIPS
1-2 Weeks	Authoring a poster	Work with your proofreader/graphic designer along the way
1-2+ Weeks	Reviewing/Finalizing Poster	More revisions will mean longer periods of time
1-10 Days	Printing	Try to allow a week. Allowing time for a digital mockup from the printer reduces printing errors. If necessary, printing can be done as a 24 hour rush job.
1-10 Days	Shipping	Avoid overnight shipping to reduce costs.

COST

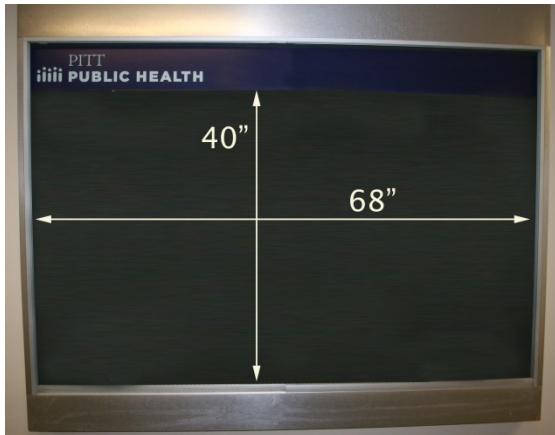
Price out your poster ahead of time. Contact your graphic designer or your printer to request a quote. This is not something that you have to do after you finish designing your poster.

POSTER SIZE

The answer to "How big should your poster be?" is not "...as large as the presentation board says I can make it." Your conference poster specifications may say a presentation board is 4'x6' or 6'x8', but the actual tack area may be smaller than that. If you are unsure, reduce your length and width by 4" to create a poster that will safely fit within the boundaries of the board. A 3.5'x5' poster accommodates most conference presentation boards. (This guide was developed for GSRs at Pitt Public Health, but it might be a good general rule for others at the school).

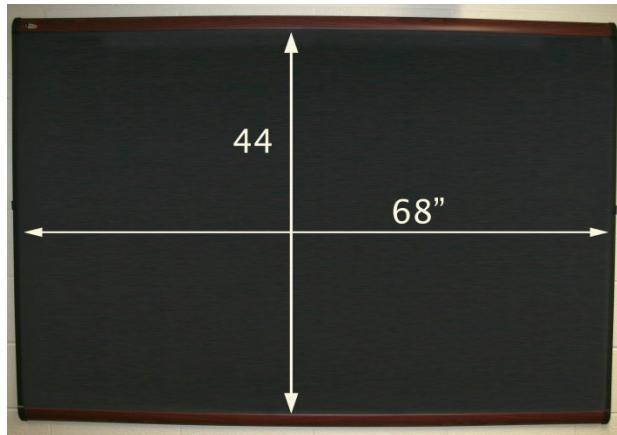
School Feature Display Cases

First Floor Parran Hall



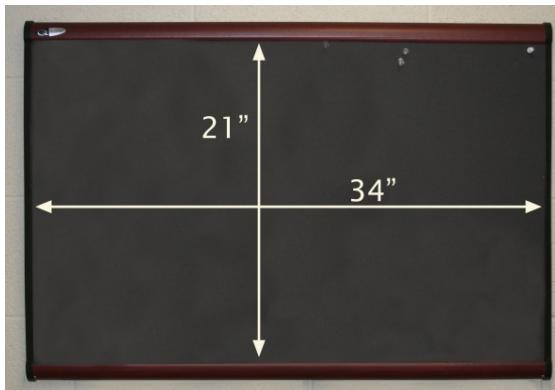
School Hallway Displays

Parran and Crabtree Hall



School Mini Hallway Displays

Parran and Crabtree Hall



Note:

Two inches of a poster will overlap with the Pitt Public Health sign in the Feature Display Case. The poster has a border that makes most overlap issues okay. Posters for Mini Hallway Display boards are typically custom posters.

WRITING STYLE

Consult the [Pitt Writing Style Manual](#) for more requirements regarding capitalization, punctuation, abbreviations, etc. Questions not addressed in the manual can be sent to wstyle@pitt.edu.

IMAGES

All-text posters are easy to ignore. Add images that reinforce your content and increase the visibility and understanding. When using an image, place the citation in the lower right corner and format it as Source/Author (Example: CDC/Smith). You may include your citation elsewhere, but be consistent.

Good Images to Use

- High Resolution Images (to avoid blur/pixilation)
- Images for which you own the copyright or have secured reproduction permission from the photographer or stock photo agency
- Images with subject consent forms. This ensures that people and properties in your photo have agreed to be photographed and displayed.
- Stock photography (with proper permission to reproduce)

- Images with Creative Commons copyright. Be sure to read the copyright language, as usage stipulations may apply.

Images to Avoid

- Copyrighted images you don't have permission to reproduce. Why not? Legal issues regarding intellectual property rights.
- Images you found on the Internet, including Google Image searches. Why not? Copyright issues and/or low resolution.
- Images that you made larger by stretching. Why not? Enlarging images drops the resolution, resulting in blur/pixelation
- Images of people without consent forms. Why not? Legal issues.

If working with someone to develop your poster (i.e. graphic designer or printer), deliver all original artwork files along with your poster file. This will allow them to make a better print of your poster.

GRAPHS AND TABLES

Like images, graphs and tables make your poster content more engaging. Do not overwhelm your audience with complicated data displays. Assess how much data you actually need to convey your point. If your audience cannot understand your poster, it won't matter how good the data set is.

Keep the font in graphs and tables consistent with the rest of the poster. Use the same font type and make the font size large enough to be readable. See "Font" for more information.

If working with someone (ie. graphic designer or printer), include all original graph and table art files in addition to your poster file.

LOGOS

Logos can be tricky. Many logos have very specific usage guidelines, including that placements be reviewed by the organization before distribution (i.e.: Pennsylvania Department of Health).

For starters, the Pitt Public Health branding graphic isn't actually considered a logo at the University of Pittsburgh. It is called a "graphic mark." In fact, all program/center sub-branding icons at Pitt are officially considered graphic marks. The only true "logo" is the University of Pittsburgh logo, which has detailed and complex usage requirements and variations. Be careful about inserting the official University logo. For example, a Pitt logo cannot appear alongside a graphic mark. That means every time you see the Pitt seal next to another program at Pitt, that author has misused the Pitt logo. An easy way to remember basic University logo usage is to treat it like an either/or scenario: Either use a graphic mark, or use the University logo; do not use both. If you have a funding acknowledgement statement to accompany a program, it is suitable to have this displayed along the bottom of the poster as a footnote.

Include other graphic marks and logos as needed. Remember to follow the same rules listed under "IMAGES: Good images to use" when inserting a logo or graphic mark (i.e. high resolution, no enlarging, usage and subject permissions, and whether placement requires review by the organization).

FONTS

Font Types

There are two types of fonts:

- SANS SERIF – used for titles, section headers, tables, graphs, etc. Examples: Century Gothic, Arial, Verdana, Gill Sans
- SERIF – used for paragraph content and body text
Examples: Garamond, Palatino, Book Antiqua, Times New Roman

One example combination is Arial Bold for headings and Times New Roman for body text. Note that a copy/paste action may carry over unintended fonts/weights, so always double-check for font consistency.

Font Sizes

The following size chart may be helpful for a general conference poster presentation. A good approach is to try to use the mid-range value for each category. If your audience will be viewing at greater distances, increase the sizes appropriately.

	Font Size (pt)	Font Type
Poster Title	64-120	Sans Serif
Sub-title (authors' names, school name, etc.)	48-80	Sans Serif
Section Headers (Abstract, Introduction, Results, etc.)	36-72	Sans Serif
Body Text	24-48	Serif
Graphs and tables	24-72	Sans Serif

Quick Tips

- DON'T USE ALL CAPS FOR LARGE PORTIONS OF TEXT. It's harder to read and may cause your audience to skip the section. Find alternate ways to emphasize content.
- Use the higher end of the font size range. If you find yourself using the lower end of the range, it might be because you've got too much text. Simplify and reduce!
 - Remember: It may be readable on your computer monitor, but will it be readable at distances of 5 feet or greater? When it is an on-stage presentation where distances are further away than a poster session board or hanging in a hallway, be sure to use larger font sizes.
 - Free fonts do not always print well. If you found a free font online, use it with caution. Read reviews about that font if possible.

PRINT VENDOR

KDC, Kinkos, and Copy Cat are examples of places to print your poster. These vendors negotiate rates with the University of Pittsburgh. The preferred vendor is KDC Printing (www.printpgh.com).

If traveling, another option is to use a reliable vendor in the area of your conference. For example, you can send documents to a Kinkos near your conference or hotel. Then, pick the poster up there or have it delivered to your hotel. Sometimes it is still cheaper to use KDC, so get two quotes.

POSTER SIZE AND MATERIAL

This document assumes that you are making a 3.5'x5' color poster with a matte finish that bleeds to the edge and does not need grommets. A matte finish is preferred over a glossy finish because glare can be distracting. Grommets are metal rings added to the edges of the poster for hanging. Unless you are hanging your poster by wire, you don't need grommets.

GETTING A QUOTE

Call or e-mail the print vendor. Describe what you are printing (see Poster Size and Material). If shipping the poster directly from the printer, include mailing information. If applicable, be sure to allow time for your poster to be shipped to your destination.

PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS

Send the poster file and accompanying images, graphs, etc. to the printer. Include information from the quote so they know what they are printing. Tell the printer that your file includes bleeds that go over the document edge. If you have created a poster with no white borders, be sure to make the background extend at least 1/8 inch beyond the border of your poster. Include delivery instructions. If time permits, request a digital proof from the printer. They will set up your poster and send you an electronic copy before printing, giving you a final chance to catch any printing errors. This is a very good step to include. It should NOT be your time to proofread for errors. That should be done BEFORE it goes to the printer. The printer will not change your mistakes. You will have to redo and resend the poster files any time you want to change something.

Be sure to allow time for poster delivery if you are not picking it up from a printer. Avoid overnight shipping to save on costs.

TRANSPORTING YOUR POSTER

If you are carrying your poster with you, make arrangements for picking up your poster from the printer. Remember to request a poster tube from the printer if you do not already have one. A poster tube is durable and prevents your poster from getting bent or crushed during transit. If you will be creating multiple posters over time, a plastic poster carrying tube is widely available and a good investment.

If you are mailing the poster to a conference or hotel, the printer may be able to take care of that for you. Alternately, you can get the poster from the printer and mail it yourself. Avoid overnight shipping to save on costs.

FILE SIZE AND POSTER LAYOUT

Unfortunately, large posters generate large file sizes. Please take advantage of your pitt.box.edu account and save a copy there so it is accessible anywhere.

A research poster template generally has four columns. In general, your poster will flow from the top left corner to the bottom right corner in the order of Introduction, Hypothesis/Method/Research, Results, and Summary/References.

Remember that spacing between the section headers and text should be kept the same, and keep fonts and sizes consistent throughout the document. For example, do not look amateurish by using one font size in one section and a slightly smaller font size in another. See "Fonts" for more information.

BRING A DIGITAL COPY

This is extremely important. Never leave home without a Plan B in case something goes wrong. Have a copy of your presentation available on a memory stick or via Box in case your poster is destroyed, not delivered, shows up with a printing error, or any other disaster that may occur. Being able to reprint your poster is an important backup. It will also allow you to digitally display your poster if requested, and you never know when someone may ask for an electronic copy. Always be prepared!