



How to improve your poster

Why is a poster important?

Poster sessions have become a popular way for scientists to present their work. They enable sampling many studies in a relatively short time – the average viewer spends two to five minutes on your poster. This is the time to convey your message. Thus, your posters should look as professional as your research. Display your results clearly and strikingly to attract attention and evoke discussion with colleagues interested in your work.

Aims of the poster

Attract attention

Visual impact is of a high priority! Make your layout easy to read and follow. The tips below will help you to make your poster transparent and attractive:

- Keep poster **size A1 vertical (594 mm × 841mm)**. Bigger posters cannot be displayed.
- Use **column format** to create order amongst text and illustrations. It makes posters easier to read in a crowd. No line should contain more than 60 characters.
- Make your poster as self-explanatory as possible. While the idea is that you stand by your poster and discuss it with colleagues, it should also be possible to understand the content without further explanation.
- **Use pictures**, diagrams, cartoons, simple figures, etc. They should be simple and clear. This is a condensed chunk of information, which explains much more than words in the limited space of your poster.
- Use **less and larger text**. Less is more. The smallest text on posters should be at least 18pt font size (including figures). Use simple sans-serif fonts and avoid writing in capital letters. Use text blocks of up to 50 words, preferably less.
- Highlight important points by colour, arrows, shadows etc. Preferably, use a light colour background and dark letters for contrast (dark background tires the eye). Do not overcrowd your poster: **20–30 % of the poster** area should **remain empty**.

Provide a brief overview

The content of your poster is as important for attracting viewers as visual impact. Think over the following points before designing your perfect poster:



- First, decide on your conclusion and then build up the poster around that. Use short, direct sentences and do tell your story with punchy phrases.
- Target your audience. Prepare your poster sufficiently simple and keep the language appropriate to your audience (avoid jargon).
- Make your title clear, to the point and prominent. This is the first line that will attract a potential reader.
- Cover the **key points** of your work:
 - 1) Scientific problem and its significance – What is the problem and why should we care?
 - 2) Addressing the problem – What is your strategy?
 - 3) Experimental – What did you actually do?
 - 4) Results – What did you actually find?
 - 5) Conclusions – What does it all mean? Where one may go from here?
- Do not include all details of your experiment.
- Include acknowledgements and references. Keep it short but visible.

Initiate discussion

Discussion is a very precious feedback on your work. Your poster could prompt the viewer to ask either about not clear content (tips for improvements in future) or about further details (knowledge exchange). Prepare yourself for a session:

- What is your work about? – asks the viewer who only skimmed interesting pictures in your poster. Prepare a short (max. 5 sentences) and to point presentation to advertise your work.
- Try to stay close by your poster. Look eager to answer any questions; however, give some space and time to your viewers and talk only when asked.

Related to the theme

According to the motto of this year's symposium "*Science Cocktail: Mixing Disciplines to Drive Innovation,*" we encourage all Empa PhD Students to incorporate the interdisciplinary theme into their posters and highlight how their research breaks boundaries of traditional disciplines.



Additional tips

- Edit and evaluate. Edit, edit and edit to reduce text.
- Have your colleagues comment on your draft.
- Try a 2 minute evaluation simulating the time spent on your poster by a typical viewer.