

# How to improve your poster.

## Why is a poster important?

Poster sessions are a popular way for scientists to present their work. This enables presenting your research study in a relatively short time i.e. an average viewer might spend 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 readable 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 should also be possible to understand it as a standalone.
- **Use pictures**, diagrams, cartoons, 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 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 & its significance – What is the issue and your motivation?
  - 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 an important part and usually useful feedback on your research work. Your poster could prompt the viewer to ask further details about your research. Prepare yourself for a session such as:

- What is your work about? – Mostly asked by viewers who only skim interesting pictures in your poster. Prepare a short (max. 5 sentences) and to the point answer to advertise your work.
- Try to stay close by your poster. Be eager to answer any questions; however, also give some space and time to your viewers at your poster and elaborate when someone asks a question.

### **Related to the theme**

According to the motto of this year's symposium "*Intelligent Materials and technologies for a better life,*" we encourage all Empa PhD Students to incorporate the theme into their posters and highlight how their research contributes to a more smarter and technologically advanced future, for making everyday lives better.

