



**Helpful Tips and Guidelines for Poster Presentations**  
**Instructions Given to Presenters for the Southern Speech Communication Association,  
CxX Pre-Conference Meeting, Dallas, 2005**

If a potential reader is not attracted to your poster in less than five seconds, this will be all the time the reader spends at your posters. Your goal is to get people to stop at your posters, which is why your poster must be attractive and substantive in terms of content.

**POSTER CONTENT**

Your poster should be a visual representation of your program. Feel free to interpret this guideline in any way you want. For example, you may wish to focus more on a specific faculty development activity for which you have lots of supporting material. You could also provide examples of student work. You might focus on a variety of program activities, as well. Or, you could present some research emerging out of the program. Feel free to be as creative as you wish, keeping in mind that your audience will be a mix of faculty and administrators who will be expecting to learn something about communication across the curriculum.

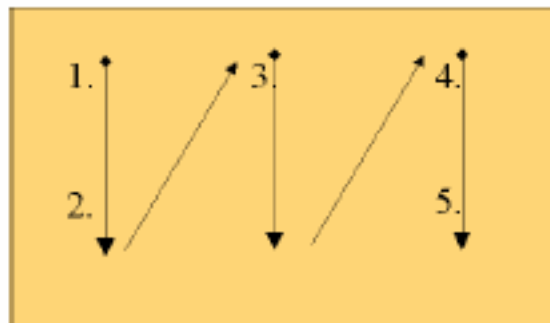
If you use our poster, you will receive a poster that is measures 36 x 48 (tri-fold). Below is a list of ideas for poster content. This list is not exhaustive, nor is it meant to be restrictive.

Ideas for poster content include the following:

- Program objectives
- Program design and activities
- Useful assessment instruments for writing/speaking assignments
- Sample student writing or speaking work emerging from the program
- Sample instructional or faculty development activities
- History or rationale for your program
- “Before and after” examples of people participating in the program
- Diagrams of courses or faculty participation in your program
- Connections to industry or other programmatic initiatives

**LAYOUT AND CONTENT**

Measure the space that you have. Lay out the space physically with letter or legal size paper to get an idea of how to plan your text, graphics, and empty space together. We approach information in a spatial sequence: top to bottom and left to right.



- A poster layout in *columns* is most common. Arrange the contents into 3, 4, or 5 columns to facilitate the flow of traffic past the poster. Your poster title should be your punch line because in that position, top centre, it will be seen first.
- Generally, 40% to 50% of your poster should be empty space. Empty space should be used to differentiate and accentuate elements of your poster as well as give your readers proper breaks to assimilate the information.

## TEXT

- **\*\*Be Consistent : Choose one font and use it throughout the poster.\*\*** Also avoid difficult-to-read fonts. Try to stick to simple fonts such as Arial, Helvetica, Geneva, Times Roman, Palatino, Century Schoolbook, Courier, and Prestige.
- The poster text should be hierarchically organized and differentiated visually. Main headings carry the most pertinent information and should be of sufficient height to be seen from 6-7 feet away.
- Avoid thick blocks of unbroken prose. This makes it difficult for viewers to identify your main points.
- Generally speaking, the title should be approximately one inch high, headings should be at least 36 point type, and text should be at least 24 point type. As an option, many students use printed "slides" from a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation created from their work.
- Your title should be quite large (36 point font or above) and should also have a color border/frame. You can create the framed effect by using construction/colored paper or poster board upon which you affix the paper.
- Avoid the CONTINUOUS USE OF CAPTIALS; they are difficult to read.

## GRAPHICS / ILLUSTRATIONS

Try to obtain a balance between words and visual images, so that one does not overpower the other.

- Illustrations should be legible from a distance of approximately 6 feet away.
- Three or four figures should be the maximum presented on one poster.
- Photographs should be relevant and referred to in the text as Figures. Try to obtain the best quality pictures possible within the time that you have available. Photographs can be highly effective in visually emphasizing your key message. Clear captions describing the image are essential.

## COLOR

- Use a colored background to unify your poster. In a brightly lit hall crowded with other posters, muted colors or shades of grey will most likely bring attention to your work than will a highly saturated color.
- Typically, the text sections of the poster are printed on white paper. Choose one (or two other colors for backing. Still others make use of color theory: warm colors (red, orange, yellow) are considered higher in visibility than cool colors (blue).
- Remember that overuse of color detracts from a poster's overall effect because it emphasizes style over substance. Generally speaking, black is the most effective color for the text itself, except in graphs.

## References

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- Woolsey, J.D. (1989). Combating poster fatigue: how to use visual grammar and analysis to effect better visual communications. *TINS*, 12 (9), 325-333.
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- Southern Alberta Nursing & Health Research Resource Unit. (2001) *Give your Visual Presentations Punch Helpful Hints for Effective Visuals*. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/nu/research/pdf>.