Presenting Research through Posters: 
A Guide for Art, Design and Media students

Posters are an excellent way of summarising and communicating information. It’s common practice for students of disciplines such as Science and Business to publicise their research findings by means of an academic poster. This guide suggests ways in which Art, Design and Media students can use posters as a visual aid in the oral presentation of their contextual research.

Powerpoint, often used to support oral presentations, presents information sequentially. By experimenting with the poster format, many visual learners have discovered a preference for organising and presenting information holistically. In this way all aspects of their topic can be seen at once.

It is possible to produce posters on the computer. However, students in the creative industries often prefer to make posters by hand. In both cases, this guide suggests ways of formulating an effective poster. It suggests ways of using the format to communicate research and discuss ideas.
1. Organising your research

There are many different ways of organising and presenting your material.
Research your topic well. Then consider:

What information should be selected for the poster?
- Provide a good heading which acts as an ‘entry point’ for your audience by naming your question, topic or theme.
- Include key points rather than large blocks of text.
- Aim for clarity.
- Consider which images or graphics would support or illustrate your discussion.

What is the best way of structuring your information visually?
- We read from top to bottom and from left to right, so expect your audience to look in the top left hand corner after they have read the central title.
- Group related information together.
- You can use devices such as arrows to lead the reader through your material (a ‘flow’ chart).
- Remember to leave ‘visual pauses’ of blank space.
- Your text should be of a legible size and a simple font, whether printed or hand-written.
- Try to balance the text and the images.
- To be effective visually, it is recommended that you use dark colours on a lighter background and use a limited colour palette.
- Measure the space you have at your disposal (A0 or A1) and lay out all the elements of your poster in rough before you stick them down (manual poster) or manipulate them (digital poster).
- Give yourself time to design the poster; rushed work won’t communicate your ideas as clearly as you would like.
2. Presenting your research

- Aim to create a time slot for your audience to look at your poster and make notes before you give your presentation.
- Consider what additional information you need to give your audience to help them to understand the key points on your poster.
- It is helpful to have this information on prompt cards in case you forget the details of what you intend to present.
- Remember to critically analyse your findings – don’t just describe your research but let the audience know your questions and conclusions.
- Practise your presentation, with your poster and your prompt cards.
- It is recommended that you give each member of the audience a handout with a paragraph detailing your area of research, and a bibliography.
3. Discussing your research

- In conferences, a poster presentation is considered less formal than a talk to a seated group of people.
- Your audience will have had a chance to read your poster beforehand and will be looking forward to discussing your ideas.
- Allow group members to ask questions and make a note of their feedback.
- Making a poster allows you to think through your research and organise your material visually.
- Presenting with a poster allows you to make visual and verbal connections between different areas and ideas.
- As your audience learn about your topic, they will make suggestions that help your project.
- Posters should be an interactive way of presenting your work.

Bibliography:

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