

The McGill Earthquake Processes Group ultimate guide to awesome posters

- Colourful is good! Use coloured boxes, bright figures/photos etc. to make an eye-catching poster
- Colour blocking a useful tool for making boxes stand out. Choose colours carefully to make sure they are complimentary! Consider complimentary colours to the section dividers as well, e.g. colours of predominant rock types. Pick colourblind friendly colours as a priority.
- For photo backgrounds make them partly transparent so the colours are less saturated and don't distract from the main content.
- Dark text on dark backgrounds is difficult to see, so is light text on light background (e.g. for section titles). Keep line widths around boxes uniform.
- Balance text and figures – not too much text! Minimum font size is **36** (24 for axis labels, other details). White space is important so make space for it (between boxes, or use white space to separate sections).
- Left-justify text in boxes to avoid jagged edges. Justifying both edges can mean variable spacing between words, which is difficult for some readers.
- Align titles and text etc. within sections and titles across sections.
- Limit the number of font sizes to 2 or 3 max. Choose fonts that are easy to read (e.g. Arial, Verdana – sans serif fonts)
- Avoid prose - text should be bullets. Use >> or other marker instead of • for important points.
- Choose a title that really summarizes the point (or conclusion) of your study – then you don't have to include an abstract because the title already sets the scene for a visitor. Avoid jargon in your title that the audience at the meeting might not be familiar with. Do not copy and paste the abstract from your abstract submission onto poster
- Weight the space on the poster according to what is important to your study.
- When arranging the poster, use boxes ok. Consider a non-rectangular box to generate white space and make something stand out. General flow is left to right. Center a large “money figure” or nice summary figure and make it big.
- Try to make figure sizes and density of text uniform across poster rather than cramming in the remaining figures in the last bit of space.
- Avoid low resolution images that look pixelated when will printed out
- The density of information on a poster might vary from conference to conference or study to study. E.g. a Nature/Science type paper vs. a JGR type paper. Choose a strategy for a poster that matches the paper you have written/intend to write.
- Generally remove unnecessary details, e.g. methods, validations, etc. unless they are important to show and/or of interest to the audience

- Number boxes to help guide a viewer through the study (slightly smaller font size for numbers preferable, include a . after the number).
- Conclusions need to stand out – use bold font, different font colour, or different box colour
- Consider a mini-conclusion statement in a different font colour (bold) at the end of each section. “What do I need to know from this box?”
- Add labels to all photos and diagrams. Point out to the viewer what you want them to see.
- Avoid having overlaps between different figures or parts of figures.
- If using boxes, keep the data inside boxes.
- Lines on figures need to be more than 1 point width. Avoid pastels that are difficult to see from a distance
- Reference list does not need to be a complete reference, one on each line. Just give enough info so someone else can go and find the paper. Smaller font size for reference box ok.
- Keep figure sizes consistent for similar types of figures.
- Consider a landscape poster if you don’t have much data
- Include presenting author email address on poster. Also twitter/other social media links. Consider QR code to link to online resources (e.g. videos).

Other resources

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1876493/>

http://www.waspacegrant.org/for_students/student_internships/wsgc_internships/posterdesign.html

For colourblind consideration:

<https://venngage.com/blog/color-blind-friendly-palette/>

<https://www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/>

<http://colorbrewer2.org/#type=sequential&scheme=BuGn&n=3>