

Poster Design Tips

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Basic principles

- A poster is a *visual* presentation of information and should be designed as such - do not simply reproduce your written paper in poster format.
- It should be understandable to the reader without verbal comment - someone might look at it while you are talking to another delegate, or while you're in the toilet.
- Remember, you are trying to catch the delegate's attention.

Creating your poster

You can use Microsoft Word or PowerPoint to create your poster. These are not graphical layout applications, but they are adequate in most cases.

- In **PowerPoint**, create your poster as a single slide. You can set the page size when you start using *File > Page Setup*, so if you want an A1 poster (594mm × 840mm), you can specify this before you start (there may not be an A1 option, but you can enter the dimensions manually).
 - PowerPoint also allows you to add guidelines to help you line up the poster elements. Use *View > Grid and Guides...* and tick the *Display grid on screen* box.
- In **Word**, create your poster as a single side of A4. You can always scale it up when you come to print it.
 - Word does not have guidelines as such, but you can get a grid by showing the Drawing toolbar (*View > Toolbars > Drawing*) which will probably appear at the bottom of the screen, then from that toolbar choose *Draw > Grid...* and tick the *Display gridlines on screen* box.
- In **both applications**, use the Drawing toolbar to add text boxes to the screen. This allows you to control the way the text is positioned on the page.

When the poster is designed, you should convert it to PDF for printing, using PDF Creator or Adobe Acrobat. The conversion process can be problematic: edges of words and images may be cut off near to the margins, images may appear degraded or misshapen, poster elements may have shifted and become overlapping. However, by ironing out these problems at the conversion stage, you avoid nasty surprises later when you come to print it out. When the PDF looks good, you can be pretty confident that the printed version will also be OK.

Test your poster early, and regularly, by converting to PDF and printing to A4, to make sure you're not storing up layout problems that will be difficult to correct later on.

Images and PDF conversion

When converting your poster to PDF, take care that your images are not degraded in the process. They may look fine on-screen but then look blurry or pixellated when printed as A1 or A0.

The following process, in Word or PowerPoint, will ensure that images retain their resolution up to A0 size (provided that they were sufficiently high-resolution in the first place - 300 pixels per inch should be sufficient). You can use these A0 settings even if the final poster will be printed as A1.

First, set the page size:

- *File > Page setup...*
- (Word only) Choose *Paper* tab
- Set *Paper size (Word) / Slides scaled for (PowerPoint)* to *Custom*
- Set *Width* to *84.1cm* and *Height* to *118.9 cm (A0)*

If using PDFcreator to convert to PDF, you have limited control over the conversion process, but you do need to set the paper size for the conversion:

- *File > Print...*
- Choose PDFcreator as the printer and click *Properties*
- Click *Advanced...*
- Set paper size to *A0* if available, or *Oversized A0* if not

If using Adobe Acrobat:

- *Adobe PDF > Change conversion settings > Advanced settings...*
- Click the *Images* folder on the left
- Set *Downsample: Bicubic downsampling to: 600 pixels per inch* for colour and/or greyscale, as required
- Set *Image quality* to *Maximum* for colour and/or greyscale, as required
- Click *OK*. You might have to save the new settings.
- Finally, *Adobe PDF > Convert to Adobe PDF*

Embedding fonts

Important! It is always a good idea to embed the fonts within the PDF document you create. If you do not, there is a danger that one or more of the fonts you have used will not be present on the printer's system, and in which case the font you chose will be replaced by a substitute, and that can mess up the layout of your poster.

How you do this depends on the way you convert to PDF; instructions for PDFCreator and Adobe Acrobat are given below:

- **Acrobat:** When printing the poster to Adobe PDF, click the *Properties* button in the *Print* window, and make sure the "Rely on system fonts only" box is not ticked.
- **PDFCreator:** After printing the poster to PDFCreator, a form will pop up. Click the *Options* button at the bottom of this form, then click *PDF* in the list to the left. Click the *Fonts* tab, and make sure the "Embed all fonts" box is ticked.

Content of the poster

- Make sure the **title** and **author's name** are prominent and eye-catching
- **Tell a story**: provide clear flow of information from introduction to conclusion
- Focus on your **major findings** - a common fault is to try to cover too much. Few delegates are going to read everything on your poster, so get to the point.
- Use graphs, tables, diagrams and images where appropriate. Use boxes to isolate and emphasise specific points.
- Always follow the conference guidelines, which may be specific about what you are expected to present.
- If you add an LSE logo, follow the [official style guide](#) for its use.

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Design suggestions

- Use all the **space** at your disposal, but do not cram in the content - white space is an important part of the layout, and good use of it can make a poster elegant and arresting.
- Use **colour** sparingly - limited use of a few colours is more striking than a 'rainbow' approach. Think about why you are using colour; it is especially useful for emphasis and differentiation.
 - Avoid colour combinations that clash (e.g. red on blue) or cause problems for people with colour-blindness (e.g. red and green in proximity).
- Use white or muted colour background (e.g. pastel shades)
- The **flow of information** should be clear from the layout; if you have to use arrows to indicate the flow, the content could probably be arranged better.
- Clearly label diagrams/drawings and provide references to them in the text where necessary.
- Again, follow the conference guidelines, which may be quite specific about paper sizes, font sizes etc.
- The title text should be readable from 6 metres away - at least 48-point text. (Note that if you are creating your poster in A4 format, to be blown up to A1 format later, the final printed font size will be approximately 3 times the size you are working with.)
- The body text should be readable from 2 metres away - at least 24-point text
- Choose a clear font with large inner space (i.e. the space inside the loops of letters such as 'o', 'd', 'p'). Good examples are Arial, Verdana, Georgia or Helvetica.
- Keep the word count as low as possible.