

10 tips for developing a conference poster

Congratulations on getting your abstract accepted – so what's next?... A poster can seem rather daunting to put together, especially if it's the first time you've done one. However, most of the content is already written (your abstract). Posters are there to engage people in a conversation, convey the main points to large crowds and advertise your work (research or clinical project). You may also choose to display your poster in your department after the conference.

1. Check the guidelines before you start

Check whether the poster is portrait or landscape and the poster size (e.g. A0). A scientific poster will usually include: title (with authors and affiliations underneath), introduction, methods, results, conclusions, literature cited and acknowledgments. Make sure you include your contact details on the poster so people interested in your work are able to contact you (posters are great networking opportunities).

2. Layout (template)

Your organisation (or in some situations the conference itself) may have their own poster template that you are required to use. If not, speak to colleagues or reach out and try and get some example templates from others. Also, look at other conference posters and see what template styles stand out to you (as being clear). Powerpoint is commonly used – before you start, ensure the page layout is set to the correct size. Remember to include your organisation's logo, and any affiliation/sponsor logos (include the BDA/RNG if you have received a bursary or you are presenting collaborative work)

3. Title

This should be brief, interesting, catchy, 1-2 lines maximum. Try to develop a short results-oriented title; it should be interesting but not clever (it's not a newspaper article).

4. Introduction

Set the scene and get people interested. Avoid a long literature review; it should be sharp and succinct with only a few sentences. Use the most relevant references only. Introduce your aim or question at the end of this section (unless the aim requires a different section according to the guidelines).

5. Methods

Outline your design, procedures, group/participant characteristics, materials, or outcome measures used. Outline any statistical analysis used. Be brief and where able use bullet points, tables and figures.

6. Results

Give an overview of the findings. Write numbers and percentages e.g. '80% of respondents (60/75) reported that...' Illustrate findings with detailed and well-designed graphs, figures. Keep paragraphs brief and short, avoiding too much text. Do not forget to refer to the numbered figure/graph within your text.

7. Discussion / Conclusion

Remind the reader of your hypothesis, aim or question. Try and explain why your findings are important and the relevance of your findings (with previous work or for clinical care). What is the main learning point (if relevant, what should happen next?) Be concise, use bullet points.

8. References and acknowledgements

Follow the guidelines of the organisers for citing published work. Cite relevant primary research papers. In the acknowledgements thank those that helped you and funded your project and mention any conflicts of interest.

9. Appearance

Poster should be bright, colourful and uncluttered. Use large and easy-to-read font throughout. Use appropriate headings to organise your poster. Ask a colleague to proof read and check grammar and any other errors. Double check you have met the guidelines of the organisers for size and presentation.

10. Presenting your poster

Know when the poster viewing sessions will be and make sure you are with your poster during your assigned time. You may be given a specified time (e.g. 3 or 5 minutes) to talk through (present) your poster. Make sure you practice this and focus on ensuring you clearly present the key take home messages (a common mistake is spending too much of the allocated time on the introduction or methods). Be prepared to answer any questions. You may wish to take some printed A4 copies to handout to people.