

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE SLIDES & POSTERS

Medical Student Research Day – 2008

Dr. Jordan E. Warnick
Office of Student Research
University of Maryland School of Medicine

ORALS

General Comments: Abstracts scheduled for ORAL sessions will be arranged as they are received. Special accommodations can be made and will be allowed if appropriate. The number of ORAL Research and Case Report presentations is limited to 12 each.

- A laptop and projector will be available
- Although you may use overheads in either B/W or color, it is suggested that you convert them to PowerPoint. A computer, HP Color printers and special transparency paper are available in the OSR for your use if you choose to use overheads.
- **Since there are no 35 mm slide projectors available, the use of 35 mm slides is not possible.** It is suggested that any slides be scanned for use with Power Point.

Content

- Effective slides should have a single, readily identifiable principal concept
- Avoid information not directly supporting that concept
- Avoid projecting text-only slides with more than 6-7 words per line; they usually are more difficult to be read easily by the audience

Preparation

- Laptops can receive DVD/CD and memory keys
- Send a copy of your file to the OSR (StudentResearch@som.umaryland.edu) **24 hours before the session**; bring a copy of the file on your choice of media

Format

- **Use a standard horizontal slide format regardless of the projection medium**
- Vertical, “super” or oversized formats cannot be accommodated

Color

- Slides with dark backgrounds (black, blue or other color) darken the room excessively and often present problems with text
- If dark backgrounds are unavoidable, don't use **red**, **dark blue** or similar text on a dark background since they do not project well
- If you choose to use dark backgrounds, use **white**, **yellow** or other light-colored lettering
- Do not use complex backgrounds – they distract the audience
- White or light pastel backgrounds are preferred with **dark lettering**

Font

- Fonts such as Arial, Comic Sans or Helvetica are more easily read than Times Roman, Courier, *etc.*

Space

- Keep slides simple with sufficient of open space
- An uncluttered appearance is essential rapid comprehension of content
- Space between lines should be sufficient to allow a clear division of the lines
- Limit messages to seven words per line and seven lines or less per slide (7x7)
- *Graphs or charts* should be simple with LARGE LETTERING and should have widely spaced axes marks
- *Tables* should be simple; under normal conditions this means no more than 3-4 columns and no more than 5-6 rows.

Take Home Message: IF YOU CAN READ THE INFORMATION ON THE COMPUTER AT ARM'S LENGTH (one yard/meter), IT SHOULD BE READABLE WHEN PROJECTED (and generally means a point size no smaller than 18 for the smallest important text

Quantity

- Try not to present more than one slide per minute (unless projecting several histopathological or methodologically similar slides).

Presentation

- The verbal text and the slide material should support and complement each other
- Give the audience a moment to become oriented with each slide before continuing
- Duplicate your slide if you refer to the same slide more than once whether it is a Power Point or overhead presentation

Time

- The overall duration of an oral presentation is 15 minutes
- Ten minutes is for the presentation and five minutes for questions and discussion
- The first two minutes should introduce your subject; the next minute explains the methods. Your results occupy the bulk of the remaining time and you should leave the last minute for summary and conclusions
- Extended talks should have proportionately larger sections

Take Home Message: If you have an oral presentation, someone is likely to be presenting before or after you for whom guests will be arriving. Do not use their time for your talk.

Audience

- Everyone enjoys an audience, especially if they are responsive and ask questions
- Give them an opportunity to interact with you
- Read the other abstracts and be there for others that are presenting

Last Minute Thoughts

- Preview your slides before you come to present
- **Power Point should be provided 24 hours prior to the presentation.** This will give us time to check your presentation's compatibility and load it onto the computer or a CD. If this is not possible, the preferred media is a memory key, DVD or CD. Please note that we use MS PowerPoint version 2007

POSTERS

Abstracts scheduled for presentation in poster sessions will be arranged alphabetically, numbered, listed in the program, and published in our *Presentation Booklet* in the same manner.

General Comments

In planning a poster presentation it is useful to keep in mind the advantages of a poster over an oral presentation:

- Posters are generally available for viewing from 12-3 pm unless otherwise stated
- Authors, judges and interested viewers have that time for discussion
- More posters can be presented in the same time and space than oral presentations
- Best of all, there is no first or last presentation on the program

Planning and experience will make your poster presentation clear, effective and rewarding.

Guidelines

- Posters should be readable by viewers five feet away
- The message should be clear and understandable without oral explanation
- The following guidelines have been prepared to help improve the effectiveness of poster communication.

○ Initial Sketch

- Plan your poster early and focus your attention on a few key points
- Try various styles of data presentation to achieve clarity and simplicity
- The use of color may help significantly
- Consider carefully what needs to be expressed in words vs. graphics?
- Utilize headlines and text topics to garner attention

○ Rough Layout

- Enlarge your best initial sketch, keeping the dimensions in proportion to the final poster (see diagram)
- Ideally, the rough layout should be full size; a blackboard is a convenient place to work
- Print the title and headlines. Indicate text by horizontal lines
- Draw rough graphs and tables

This will give you a good idea of proportions and balance. If you are working with an artist, show the poster layout. Ask associates for comments. This is still an experimental stage.

○ Final Layout

The artwork is complete. The text and tables are typed but not necessarily enlarged to full size. Now ask yourself:

- Is the message clear?
- Do the important points stand out?

- Is there a balance between words and illustrations?
- Is there spatial balance?
- Is the pathway through the poster clear (left to right)?
- **Balance**
 - The figures and tables should cover slightly more than 50% of the poster area
 - If you have only a few illustrations, make them large
 - Do not omit the text, but keep it brief
 - The poster should be understandable without oral explanation.
- **Topography**
 - Avoid abbreviations, acronyms and jargon
 - Use a consistent font throughout. An 8-1/2 x 11" sheet of paper photostatically enlarged 50% makes the text readable from five feet.
- **Eye Movement**
 - The movement (pathway) of the eye over the poster should be natural – down the columns or along the rows
 - Size attracts attention
 - Arrows, pointing hands, numbers and letters can help clarify the sequence
- **Simplicity**
 - Resist the temptation to overload the poster
 - More material may mean less communication
 - The poster-board surface area (cork board) is ~4' high and 6' wide

Banner

- **Banners are produced in the OSR from the titles of your abstracts on a first come-first serve basis. They can be done within 15 minutes**
- We prepare a 12" high headline strip that contains:
 - TITLE OF PRESENTATION running the full width of the poster (red)
 - NAMES of AUTHORS (blue)
 - AUTHORS' AFFILIATION (department, school, university), CITY and STATE (black)
 - A School of Medicine Seal is added to either or both sides of the banner depending on whether the work was done here or elsewhere. If done elsewhere an additional logo can be added

NOTE ABOUT LARGE FORMAT PHOTOGRAPHIC POSTERS: The OSR can not provide funds to do a full, blown up photographic version of your poster on one sheet of photographic paper. If you should desire to do that, please note that it must be funded by sources other than the OSR.