Poster Presentation Guidelines

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There is no point in waiting.
The train stopped running years ago.
All the schedules, the brochures,
The bright-colored posters full of lies,
Promise rides to a distant country
That no longer exists.

Anonymous

1 Introduction

A poster a presentation is method of displaying your results that has some things in common with both written and spoken presentations. Like a written paper, a poster should be understandable to a reader even if you are not there. Like a scientific talk, much of your emphasis should be on delivering your results visually, and you should avoid using too many words.

The remainder of this document contains recommendations for making a successful poster. Many sets of instructions for creating a good poster [*Block*, 1996; *Day*, 1998; *JSR*, 2007], are available (both on and offline) if you would like more detailed instructions. The key thing to do while you are creating your poster is to try to put yourself in the place of someone looking at it, and to make the point of your poster as clear as possible for the viewer.

2 General Guidelines

- Like a formal lab write-up, a poster should include an overview of the entire experiment, but it should emphasize your results and conclusions. The poster should start with a brief abstract which summarizes in a few sentences what you did with your experiment. The purpose and methods of your experiment should be explained, but only use as much detail as you need to setup your results and conclusions.
- Remember that a poster is largely a visual medium, so you should focus on including graphs, figures, and pictures that tell the story of your experiment. All figures, graphs, and pictures should be numbered sequentially and should have captions. Captions should have enough detail to make it possible to understand the figure without the need for any additional information, since people will look at your poster when you are not around to answer questions. If you did not create the figure yourself, the source should be noted in the caption.
- While text is necessary to explain your work, you should avoid long paragraphs. Write short, active sentences and use bulleted lists where appropriate.
- Posters for more formal settings are often using electronically (using programs like LaTeX, Illustrator, or Powerpoint) and printed to large poster printers, but you can use more primitive methods here. Create your text and figures however you like, and tape or paste them to your poster board.

- Be careful when designing the look of your poster. Posters should be visually appealing and legible. Make judicious use of color and be careful about font size. The title of your poster should be legible at least 10 m away, the section headings 5 m away, and the rest of the text at least 2 m away. Be particularly careful about text in plots — it is all too common to have tiny text in plots.
- Structure your poster so that the ordinary flow that the audience should follow when reading your poster is clear. Typically posters are broken into columns, but other layouts are fine too.
- Come up with your own title for your poster. You will probably want to include it centered across the top of your poster.
- Remember to include units and uncertainties with your results and data. Also, make sure to correct any mistakes that I pointed out to you on your lab write-up. Uncorrected mistakes are irritating.

3 Specific Requirements

- Your poster should be mounted on hard poster board or cardboard with a size between 40 x 32 and 48 x 36. Note that we will likely be hanging the posters on the wall, so if your poster ends up being unusually heavy, you may want to install hooks on it.
- Include the title of your poster, your name, your partners' names, and the date.
- Include a list of references. The list should have full bibliographic information and web URLs where appropriate.

4 Poster Session Guidelines

For our poster session, we will be hanging the posters on the walls of Peter Engel Science Center. The poster session will be divided into two parts, with one member of each lab group in each part for most groups. While the first group is presenting their posters, the members of the second group along with Physics department faculty members (and anyone else that wanders by) will circulate past the first groups posters listening to the presentations and asking questions. While viewing the posters, audience members will also be evaluating them. After the first group is done, the second group will present.

Part of your grade on your posters will be based on how your poster presentation is rated by other students and Physics faculty members. Another part of the grade will be based on my evaluation of how well you performed in rating other student's posters. You may not rate every poster equally and you must include reasons with your evaluations. You will get to see the reviews of your poster after the presentations are done.

5 Poster Evaluation

Poster presentations will be evaluated equally on Contents and Delivery. The posters should contain the necessary parts and describe the physics of the experiment, and they should do it clearly while following the guidelines listed here. The evaluation guidelines that will be included on the review forms are listed below.

Contents

1. There should be an appropriate balance of contents among Theory, Experiment, and Analysis.
2. The emphasis should be on experimental work carried out in lab, and on analysis of the data.
3. Connections should be made to the underlying physics.

Delivery

1. Presentations should be organized in a logical way, with the necessary components; for instance, posters and papers should include an Abstract and Conclusion.
2. Visuals or Graphics should be of appropriate quality.
3. Talks should fit within the time limit, allowing time for questions from the audience.
4. Professionalism should be maintained in regard to language, attire, attitude, and responses to questions.

References

Block, S. M., Do's and Don'ts of Poster Presentation, *Biophysical Journal*, *71*, `http://www.biophysics.org/education/block.pdf`, 1996.

Day, R. A., *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*, third ed., Orynx Press, Phoenix, Arizona, 1998.

JSR, Poster presentations, `http://www.abdn.ac.uk/physics/guide/postadv.html`, 2007.