

# **How to write an…**

# **Academic Poster**

An academic poster is a visual way of communicating and sharing information. It must be eye-catching and get a point across using a mix of text and images.

Academic posters are formal and must be referenced.

**Important!**

Check your department's guidelines or assignment instructions for further guidance on academic posters.

## **The basics of academic posters**

### **Audience**

* Identify who you're talking to and keep them in mind.
* Who will be your audience - other academics, your peers, or a mix of both?

### **Message**

* Be guided by the learning outcomes and topic.
* Make sure you keep reminding yourself about why you're making the poster.
* What do you want people to learn from your poster?
* When you're putting together your poster, think about how you want to organise it.
* Consider what the main point of your poster is and choose a layout that fits that purpose.
* You could go for a circular design that flows smoothly from section to section, or a columnar design that's easy to read like a newspaper.
* Decide if you want to number the sections or use arrows to show the way.
* Consider if it would be better to use text or a graphic for the content.
* Map out your design, thinking about where people will start reading and the natural flow of information.
* How will you make sure your audience understands how to navigate your poster?

### **Conciseness**

* A poster needs precise and concise communication so spend time identifying your key points, be specific and use plain English, not jargon.
* The content needs to have immediate impact.
* Don't cram too much information.

### **Visual appeal**

* Choose images, graphs or tables to make and emphasise your point and always label them.
* Illustrations like graphs, charts, and images can make complicated information easier to understand and give readers a nice visual break from all the text.
* Try to show your research visually by using charts or graphs to explain complex information.
* Published images are subject to copyright law, so you can’t just use any image you find on the internet.
* If you're using images from the internet, look for websites with royalty-free images that are covered by a Creative Commons license.
* Always remember to give credit to the person who made the image and cite it in the proper citation style.
* Refer to your departmental/module handbook for the referencing style to use.
* Don't go overboard with images.
* Make sure the images you use relate to what's on the poster, or else they'll just distract from it.
* Be consistent when using fonts.
* Using colour can add good visual appeal to your poster.
* Aim for good contrast between text and background colours to ensure readability.
* Also beware that some contrasting colour combinations are easier to read than others.
* Make sure to have 'white space' - it doesn't have to be white, just have plenty of white space/blank areas between sections.

### **Critical approach**

* You need to have a critical approach to the content and not be descriptive.

### **References**

* Academic posters contain academic information, so they will need to be formal and structured.
* Don't forget to include citations and references in your final box or image on the poster - that's where the reference list goes!
* Make sure you acknowledge any sources you mention in an academic poster, such as books, articles, newspapers, websites, and images.
* Take time and care on this step.
* Reference correctly and concisely using your subject referencing style.
* Follow your departmental/module handbook's referencing style.
* Contact your [Subject Librarian](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/library-services/librarians/) for referencing advice.

### **Tools**

Here are examples of the options available you can use to make an academic poster:

* Powerpoint or Publisher in Microsoft Office, and is free to install on your own computer. Instructions to install: [FAQ 1391](https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?id=1391)
* [Canva](https://www.canva.com/en_gb/) is another option, it is a graphic design site with thousands of custom templates, stock images, easy-to-use editing features.