

How to write an...

Academic poster

An academic poster is a visual way of communicating and sharing information. It has to 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](#) for referencing advice.

Tools

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

- **Powerpoint** in Microsoft Office, and is free to install on your own computer. Instructions to install: [FAQ 1391](#)
- **Canva** is another option, it is a graphic design site with thousands of custom templates, stock images, easy-to-use editing features.