What is a poster?
- Static, visual medium, that is used to communicate ideas, results, and messages
- Technical information is presented
- Much ‘better’ than an oral presentation because the poster does most of the ‘talking’!

Writing an abstract
- Abstracts are often available in advance to help readers decide which posters are of interest
- Focus on the best way to “sell” your research as:
  - new
  - interesting
  - exciting
  - valuable

Writing an abstract (continued)
- Abstracts should be concise but complete
- Include brief mention of
  - rationale
  - methods
  - key results, and
  - significance of results - conclusion
- Appropriate length: 100 - 250 words

Poster basics:
- Provide an overview of research results
- Enable efficient transmission of information
- Promote conversations about research
Posters provide an overview of research results

- Ensure that the reader can quickly scan the poster for the key points
- Less is More: you can fill in the details to those most interested

Posters enable efficient transmission of information

- Visitors will spend 11 seconds deciding whether or not to read a poster
- Most readers will spend 2 - 3 minutes (at most) at a poster
- Posters that attract attention AND are easy to read are the most effective

Posters help to promote conversations about research

- Posters are different from oral presentations and from written reports
- Posters require both advance preparation and active participation

Before you begin writing your poster

- Decide on your ‘take home’ message
- Outline points and evidence needed to convey the message
- Prepare a draft layout to allocate space

Where will the poster be displayed?

- Anticipate the setting
  - How much space is available?
  - How will the posters be mounted?
  - What font size is appropriate?
  - How do you catch someone’s eye?

Who is your audience?

- How familiar are they with the rationale behind your study?
- What level of detail is necessary?
Design

- Poster design is a matter of personal taste
- The goal should be to create something that is attractive, and that makes an impression

Choose an appropriate color scheme

- Muted colours for the background
- More intense colours as borders or for emphasis
- Be conservative
- Two to three related background colours (Methods, Results, Conclusions) will unify the poster

Clipart

- Should only be used if they add interest to the display and complement the subject matter - otherwise all they do is distract

- Can lead to tremendous time wasting, fiddling about with images and choosing images / cartoons, rather than concentrating on content

Text

- A poster should be legible from about one meter, and attract interest from about five meters.
- Aim for a word count of about 300 to 800 words. 300 words leaves plenty of room for graphics, while 800 words would be more text heavy.
Text continued

- For clarity, use a sans-serif font like Arial or Helvetica. To be legible at a distance, the main title should be around 70-100 pts, subheadings around 40 pts, body text around 24 pts.
- Format headings and subheadings consistently. This helps structure your information visually.

Putting it all together

- Organize in columns rather than rows
- Make full use of the space
- Use section headings
- Provide guideposts for the reader (logical order, arrows, numbers...)
- Be concise, don’t waffle!!
- The goal should be to create something that is not only visually attractive, but impressive in its content

Poster size / software

- A0 118.9 cm x 84.1 cm
- A1 84.1 cm x 59.4 cm
- Choose a software program that you will be comfortable with (eg Powerpoint, Photoshop)
- To print effectively, images should be high resolution (150-300 dpi).

Poster format

- Title, Authors, and Affiliations
- (Abstract)
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- (Further work)

Sample layout

![Sample layout diagram]

Biologically active growth factor displayed on the surface of unmodified retroviral vector particles

A L. Century, A. J. Gordon and U. K. Lassiter. European Research Ltd, Dept of Immunology, Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, Hammersmith Hospital, London W12 0NN.
Title, authors, and affiliations

- Title should be
  - readable from at least 2 meters away (70-100 pt)
  - easily located over people’s heads
- Consider photographs of authors to help visitors identify presenters
- Affiliations help ‘place’ authors

Introduction

- Scene setting: What is your question and why is it relevant?
- Identify key objectives and hypotheses
- Use bullets to aid in identifying key points

Methods

- Only those most interested in the research will read methods
- Minimize detail, consider using a smaller font
- Provide diagrams or photographs of experimental set-ups; copies of questionnaires, other useful visuals

Results

- Pictures (i.e., graphs, diagrams) really are worth 1000 words
- Try to convert tables into figures, or keep them as simple as possible
- Link figures directly to the text that explains them

Results - figures

- Be sure your figures are effective
  - Convey enough information, not too much
  - Keep scale consistent and appropriate
  - Display data in a logical order
  - Label clearly, completely and accurately
  - Avoid three-dimensional presentations

Conclusions

- Restate ‘take home’ message
- Restate evidence supporting conclusions
- Use bullets
- Include literature cited and acknowledgements as appropriate
Check your spelling

- There is nothing more amusing or annoying than spelling mistakes on public display!!
- Spelling mistakes convey an impression of little effort, carelessness, and can undermine confidence in the presented work.

Maintain a consistent style

- Inconsistent style gives the impression of disharmony.
- Headings on different pages should appear in the same position on all pages.
- Graphs should be of the same size and scale, especially if they are to be compared.

Maintain a consistent style

- If bold lettering is used for emphasis on one page, then do not use italics on others.
- Captions for graphs, drawings and tables should be positioned either at the top or the bottom of the figure.

Review, review and review

- Make draft versions of your poster and check them for:
  - Mistakes
  - Legibility
  - Inconsistency in style
- Try different layout arrangements
- Ask colleagues for an ‘honest’ opinion
- Be critical

Putting it all together

- Select mounting options appropriate for the venue
  - foam core poster board
  - mounted sections
- Consider portability
- Bring extra supplies for mounting
- Plan for emergencies (lost luggage...)

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At the poster session

- Prepare and practice a short (2 - 4 minute) presentation to describe your work
- Give people 30 sec. to read the poster without interruption, then...
- Introduce yourself and ask if they have questions
- Relax and have fun!

Golden rules!

- Focus on the key message
- Keep the poster simple
- Better to write too little than too much
- Design / colour schemes / pretty pictures etc are secondary to good content

Some references

- http://www.aspb.org/education/poster.cfm
- http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/effective.html

Electronic posters

  - INTRODUCTION: to compare e-posters with traditional posters.
  - METHODS: 10 presenters were invited to supplement their poster by submitting its title and contents electronically. On projection, the submissions appeared as a poster. During chaired rounds, presenters ‘talked to’ the projection as if it were a traditional poster. They ‘clicked’ onto individual tables or figures to enlarge to full screen. A further ‘click’ returned the screen to poster format. Delegates attending two e-poster sessions, and a control group attending two simultaneous traditional poster rounds, responded to a questionnaire.
  - RESULTS: For all questions, the trend was in favour of e-posters with significant differences seen for ‘seeing’ (P= 0.009), ‘interest capture’ (P< 0.007) and ‘encouragement of discussion’ (P<0.032) vs 1. Delegates thought that e-posters should be used in future, but most (23 vs 8) thought that traditional posters should not be completely replaced.
  - CONCLUSIONS: E-posters enable detailed search of a computer-based database of presentations, and viewing of the full content of all posters. E-posters should be used in tandem with traditional posters to improve the delivery of original communications.