



# Fact Sheet

## Design posters for maximum impact

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Do you want your research or program evidence to effect changes to policy and practice? How can you use posters to communicate your key messages to those who matter? How can you maximise the impact of your poster and/or poster presentation?

### Designing the poster

#### Use a brief title: a sub-title can help describe what the poster is about

The title needs to accurately reflect the content of the poster. Be creative and capture viewer's imaginations! A TITLE ALL IN CAPITAL CASE IS DIFFICULT TO READ. A Title Using Title Case or A title using sentence case will be easier to read.

#### A great poster catches your eye, and is:

- ▶ clear and simple
- ▶ easy to read
- ▶ organised with a logical flow
- ▶ relevant to viewers in its content
- ▶ taking advantage of the visual medium
- ▶ providing viewers with 1 or 2 main messages

#### Sub-headings should be descriptive

Headings are navigational tools: they help viewers to scan and identify what each section of the poster is about.

#### Use succinct text in 'bite size chunks'

Keep all text (headings and body text) to a minimum. Posters are often viewed during conference breaks or during busy sessions so viewers don't have time to read a lot. Organise text into digestible-bites using small paragraphs, bullet lists, or text boxes. Bullet lists do not always need the 'and's' and 'the's'.



#### Graphics convey your message quickly

Posters are a visual medium and should include graphics. Graphics not only catch people's eye and draw viewers in for a closer look... they are understood more quickly than text so are valuable tools for communication of your main messages. Use photos, cartoons, figures, tables, diagrams. Label them if necessary.

#### Colour also helps viewers quickly understand

For example, colour can be used for emphasis:

	Researchers	Practitioners	Policy Advisors
Always	0%	100%	20%
Sometimes	5%	0%	15%
Rarely	5%	0%	58%
Never	90%	0%	7%

#### Compulsory content

- ▶ Author's name/s
- ▶ Author's organisation/s
- ▶ Organisation's logo/s
- ▶ Contact details (website, email, phone, postal)
- ▶ Poster publication date
- ▶ Acknowledgements

#### Focus on 1 or 2 main messages and do NOT overcrowd the poster

Keep it simple. What are the main messages you want to convey? A poster is not the medium to convey *everything* about your project or program.

#### Font size? Bigger is best!

Ensure fonts are large and easy to read. The words need to be legible from 1.5 metres away. Recommended sizes: Title: 72 pt; Headings: 48-60 pt; Body text: 24-48 pt. Sans-serif fonts (without the bits on the ends) are clearer to read from a distance. Can you still read the text if you are reproducing the poster on an A4 handout?

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## Producing your poster

Make sure you follow the poster guidelines of the conference where you are presenting. You may be able to use the services of a graphic designer. Allow plenty of time for discussions about your content, the design, and agree on timelines. If not, posters can be prepared using Microsoft software such as PowerPoint or Publisher. Proofread and obtain approval from all authors before final printing. Ask someone else to proof read for you... after all your hard work, you may be 'blind' to errors.

## Travelling with your poster

Carrying a poster in a poster tube may cause hassles especially on planes. Try cutting your poster (using a commercial cutter) into 3 or 4 sections so they can fit in your suitcase. Before hanging up your poster, stick sections together using tape on back of your poster.

## Take with you

- ▶ Materials to hang your poster (if required): pins, velcro dots, tape.
- ▶ A4 handouts of your poster.
- ▶ A plastic sleeve to hang your handouts up with your poster.
- ▶ Business cards to hand out.
- ▶ An electronic copy of the poster. Some conferences display the winning poster on a screen or upload an electronic copy on their website.

## Conference convenors can help by:

- ▶ Grouping posters based on similar themes.
- ▶ Displaying the posters where delegates will be gathering and in well lit areas.
- ▶ Displaying posters for the duration of the conference.
- ▶ Allowing delegates enough time to view the posters.
- ▶ Planning and promoting designated times for poster viewing when authors stand by their poster.
- ▶ Awarding a prize for best poster.

## Other tips to help you maximise your impact:

- ▶ If a poster prize is offered, nominate yourself (if nominations are required!).
- ▶ Display your poster at your workplace.
- ▶ The poster can travel with you to workshops etc.
- ▶ Send an electronic copy of your poster to others.
- ▶ Display your poster on your organisation's website.

## Resources

Canadian Health Services Research Foundation. (2002). *Designing a great poster*. Retrieved 21 April 2009, from [http://www.chsrf.ca/knowledge\\_transfer/pdf/poster\\_e.pdf](http://www.chsrf.ca/knowledge_transfer/pdf/poster_e.pdf)

Lowcay B & McIntyre E. (2005). Research posters—the way to display. *BMJ Careers* 331:S251.

Lowcay B & McIntyre E. (2006). Research posters—the way to display (2). *BMJ Careers* 332:S29.

PHC RIS infoBytes: Design and present posters for maximum impact – [http://www.phcris.org.au/infobytes/poster\\_presentations.php](http://www.phcris.org.au/infobytes/poster_presentations.php)



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