

Focused
Simple
Graphic
Ordered

How to design a poster

<http://tinyurl.com/42ek8> and <http://tinyurl.com/9weol>

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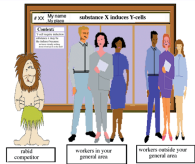
An effective poster is simple:



- Focused** It focuses on a single message.
- Simple** It avoids saturating the viewer with text.
- Graphic** It doesn't tell, it shows: graphics dominate.
- Ordered** It uses a visual hierarchy for emphasis.

Advice below tells how you can reach these objectives.

1. Design for 3 audiences.

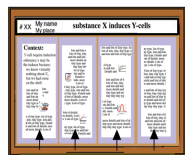


Attract more than your competitors.

Your competitors need no effort to attract. Viewers in your area need context and accessibility. Viewers outside your area also need the problem explained.

If you develop the context, you reach a larger audience and get broader input.

2. Organize for easy viewing.

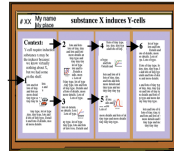


Lay out in column format.

If you lay out in rows instead, those who read the top row may be unable to fight their way back to the beginning to read the next row. They will move on to the next poster.

If your poster is easy to view, more people will view it.

3. Indicate the sequence.

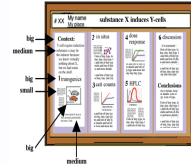


Supply clues.

Use numbers, letters, a logical sequence. Order the panels visually, in units and columns. Avoid asymmetries, which distract the eye.

If the sequence is clear, viewers won't have to search to find your evidence.

4. Use a visual hierarchy.



Visually reflect the relative importance.

If something is important, make it BIG. Title is biggest, headings next then explanations. Use figures and graphs to make evidence obvious.

If your message is visually emphasized, viewers will get your message at a glance.

5. Vital information = big type

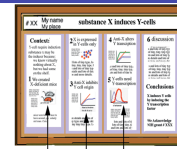


Put the take-home messages in big headings.

Use headings to identify results *explicitly*. Headings state the message: instead of saying "Results," identify the result e.g. "Transgenics grow extra feet".

If your message is written large, viewers can get your message at a distance.

6. Make graphics dominate.



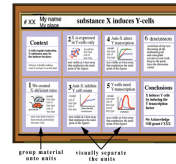
BIG figures that use color

Emphasize material visually.

Use graphics, figures, cartoons; avoid unornamented tables. Use color to emphasize and to link words with images. Use formats without keys; write explanations on the figures.

If viewers don't have to decode the evidence, they can grasp your message with ease.

7. Organize visually.

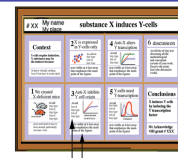


Maximize order and emphasize with color.

Keep panels similar in shape, confirmation and orientation. Group elements together to form conceptual units. Use color for emphasis, and use it consistently.

If the evidence is organized and emphasized, your message will be obvious.

8. Use readable text.



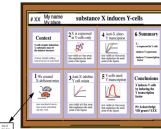
Text is readable at a distance

Think of text as just another visual aid.

Keep text brief, compact and single-spaced. Title/major headings readable at 6 feet, the rest at 3 feet. Avoid using all capitals or right-adjusted text.

A readable poster obeys the commandment: Thou shalt not irritate thy viewer.

9. Discard details.



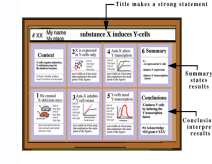
Discard details

Edit ruthlessly.

Omit all you can; simplify verbiage; dump details. Details detract. If you must have details, use a handout. Simple messages are the most memorable.

If viewers are undistracted by details, they can focus on your message.

10. Make strong conclusions.

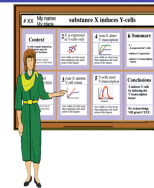


Step beyond merely stating results.

Differentiate among data, summaries and conclusions. Commit yourself to *state* interpretations and conclusions. Make the strongest statement your data will support.

If viewers know your interpretation, they can take your message home.

11. Use graphics in your talk.



Focus on the evidence: the graphics.

Start with context: the problem, its importance, your solution. Don't read the poster: use it as a visual aid, pointing to figures. Practice 5 and 2 minute talks, then face your viewers!

If you focus on *what* is important, viewers can understand *why* your work is important.