

Short and simple advice for good posters:

First of all: **A poster is not a paper!** The purpose of a poster is to catch the attention of the delegates for your work and to present it in an attractive and interesting way and make them ask for a preprint of a proper publication.

People should understand your research and, ideally, discuss it with you, contribute ideas and possibly become part of your scientific network. Almost nobody reads posters from top to bottom. In a conference with hundreds of posters, this is next to impossible. For most scientists, posters are the first step into the scientific community and to become visible. *A poster is a lot of work. It would be a pity to waste it.*

Unfortunately, many posters suffer from verbal diarrhoea and cannot not tell important from not so important information. They are boring, and it seems as if people believe that boredom contributes to scientific seriousness and credibility. Little do they know.

Watch your own behaviour as a poster audience: Which posters attract you? Obviously those who catch your attention. Why do they? Learn from that.

Here is the fool-proof checklist for good posters:

1. **What is the poster about? Make a **short** and precise title.**
2. **Why was the work done? This can be written in “Motivation”.**
3. **Which methods were applied? This will be documented in “Materials & Methods” (but don’t get lost in methods description)**
4. **What was the result? This should be shown in graphs which are preferably self-explaining – you are not always there and explain them...**
5. **What do we know now? Why are the results relevant and what is their consequence? For this, a brief “discussion” paragraph is appropriate.**

No. 2 and 5 should be *placed on eye level* (not at the bottom of the poster!) for quick information as estimated by people who do not want to read a poster from upper the left to the lower right corner.

Use short sentences and bullet points – avoid long text blocks.

Always provide a print of the poster as a handout in A 4 (indicating the conference and the year at which it was presented – many of us have collected handouts over the years and it is difficult to remember the event where they were presented)

Always provide your e-mail address and business cards at the poster for contact. Provide a little box or bag for business cards of people who attend your poster while you are away and who are interested in more information.

Attend the poster at the allotted times

**P.S.: And here are the seven ways to reproducibly make a dreadful poster:
(Paradigm: “If posters are not boring, they are not scientifically serious –
interesting posters are superficial”)**

1. Choose a long and complicated title and include some strange acronyms
2. Use as much text as you can, possibly in a small font and with continuous text
3. Don't give any clue why the study has been carried out
4. Present many little figures with many bars and points and complicated captions
5. Add some really long tables and load them with numbers
6. Don't reveal what was the actual result, what it means and why it is relevant – or if so, write it in small font at the bottom of your poster, down at knee cap level, never on eye-level
7. Stay away from your poster and avoid discussions

Then, you have successfully invested quite some of work into your poster to remain unnoticed.

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