

Useful Advice for Poster Presentations

Following is some useful advice regarding poster presentations. This information is provided for information purposes only. The only restriction on posters for the Maine Water Conference is that they meet the maximum size requirement of 4" x 3" (landscape).

Design and Layout

Attention to detail makes poster presentations a success. A general concept is that posters should stimulate discussion, not give a long presentation. Because space is limited, keep your text to a minimum, emphasize graphics, and make sure every item in your poster is necessary. You can always come to the session armed with handouts that provide more details than your poster. Also, have business cards available so that interested people can contact you later. A poster is essentially a visual presentation, so try to find ways to show what you did. Here are some tips:

- Draw a rough sketch of your poster on graph paper to develop a clear idea of which components will go where.
- Include the title and authors of your poster as listed in your abstract.
- Information on your poster should read like a book - flowing from left to right and from top to bottom. It may be helpful to use arrows or identifiers (sequential letters or numbers) to guide your reader through the poster. You can also arrange it in two or three vertical columns, but not horizontal strips. The introduction or rationale should be placed at the upper left and the outcome/impact or concluding comments should appear at the lower right. Objectives, educational activities, and other information will fill the remaining space.
- Keep it simple - too much information leads to messy or busy posters.
- Avoid overwhelming your audience with too many numbers, words and/or complicated graphs.
- Stick to two or three main points. Too many can confuse the viewer.
- Get feedback from others before you finalize it.

Text

- Double-space all text, using left justification.
- Use short sentences, simple words, and bullets to illustrate discrete points.
- Written material should be concise.
- Avoid using jargon, acronyms, or unusual abbreviations.
- Your printed outcomes/impacts should permit observers to focus on a concise statement of your central findings that lends itself to informal discussion.

Fonts

- All information should be large enough to read easily from at least 4 feet away.
- The text should be no smaller than 24 points.

- Author(s) and affiliation(s) should be at least 42 pt.
- Subheadings should be at least 60 points.
- The title should be printed across the top of the poster in characters of 80-150 points.
- San serif fonts (font styles without the small finishing strokes that stem from the upper and lower ends of a character) are easiest to read. Suggested options include: Arial, Century Gothic, Franklin Gothic Medium, Lucida Sans.
- Choose one font and then use it throughout the poster.
- Add emphasis by using **boldface**, underlining, or color, *italics* are sometimes difficult to distinguish from regular.
- Do not use all caps unless it is for one or two word headings. ALL CAPS IS DIFFICULT TO READ.

Illustrations (Graph, Charts, photos, etc.)

- The success of a poster directly relates to the clarity of the illustrations and tables.
- Self-explanatory graphics should dominate the poster (at least 50% of your poster space).
- Keep captions brief.
- A minimal amount of text should supplement the graphic materials.
- Graphic materials should be visible from a distance of four (4) feet.
- Only include essential information in graphs and tables.
- Label data lines in graphs directly, using large fonts and color. The use of legends and keys will take the viewer more time to interpret your message.
- Lines in graphs should be thicker than normally provided in printed letter-sized paper reports or manuscripts.
- Use colors to distinguish different data groups in graphs. Avoid using patterns or open bars in histograms.
- Colored transparency overlays are useful in comparing/contrasting graphic results before finalizing your poster materials.

Use of Color

- Overuse of color can be distracting - restrained use of 2 to 3 colors for emphasis is valuable.
- Two to three related background colors *will* unify the poster.
- Use a light background with darker photos; a dark background with lighter photos.
- Use a neutral background (gray) to emphasize color in photos, a white background to reduce the impact of colored photos.