

How to Make a Poster for Quantitative Social Science Research

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Poster presentation serves two purposes. First, it is an efficient way to get feedback from many people in a relatively short amount of time. Second, making a poster forces you to think carefully about the presentation of your theoretical arguments and empirical results. Indeed, making a poster before writing a paper is a good way to think about the organization of the paper.

A poster is essentially equivalent to a set of presentation slides. At a poster session, you will be giving an oral presentation about your research project to whoever stop by your poster just like you give a seminar talk. The only difference is that the presentation will be more interactive as you are talking to a much smaller audience at a poster session than in a seminar. Do not have your audience *read* your poster. Rather, you will be using the poster to explain the contributions of your research. Before making a poster, you should complete the following steps.

1. Finish all the empirical analyses. Without knowing your empirical results, you will not know how to present your research.
2. Finalize tables and figures you use to present your main results. These will serve as the core of your poster.
3. Determine the title of your paper: The title should be informative about the main contributions of your paper. A catchy but noninformative title should be avoided.
4. Draft an abstract of 150 words. The abstract should not be part of the poster (rather you should use bullet points to summarize it), but carefully drafting it should help you figure out the main contributions of your research.

Completing these tasks clarifies the exact contributions of your research and the best way to present them.

Making a Poster

Once the above tasks are complete, you are ready to make a poster. Follow the guidelines below when making your poster.

1. **Organization.** The structure of your poster should follow that of the paper to be written. There is only one optimal way of presenting your project, which should be used for both the paper and the poster.

2. **Style.** Use keywords and half sentences with bullet points rather than full sentences. You will be verbally explaining them to others rather than having them read every sentence on your poster. One useful rule of thumb is to avoid a long sentence that goes over one line. Be concise and use tables and figures effectively.
3. **Aesthetic.** Tables and figures should be formatted so that they readily convey the main messages. Directly present quantities of interest that are easy to interpret and explain.
4. **Software.** Use \LaTeX beamerposter package, which allows you to make a beautiful poster.

What to Do During the Poster Session

Both easels and poster board will be provided along with push pins. Arrive enough in advance to set up your poster. Use push pins to attach the poster to the board and place them on an easel.

The poster session will be approximately two hours long. *Don't leave your poster unattended.* Presenting a poster is very similar to giving a seminar talk, but the difference is that you can more freely interact with your audience. Encourage your audience to ask questions, point out strengths and weaknesses, and provide alternative ways to approach the problem. If you are visiting someone else's poster, try to do the same for them.

In addition, pay attention to whether or not people are immediately understanding your tables and figures, whether the structure of the poster is working, and if there are any significant issues you have not noticed. Such feedback should help you finalize your analysis and draft your paper. Take notes and use them to improve your paper.