

PREPARING A POSTER

1. Communicate a theme

People spend on average less than one minute at a poster (possibly more at a scientific meeting). Less than 1% read the entire thing. What they do read is not necessarily read in a linear manner.

So, in order to get as much of your message to as many people as possible, choose a theme for your poster and communicate it in the title. Then present five or fewer main ideas with headings that support the theme. For example, instead of:

Preparing a Poster
Introduction
Methods and materials
Production
Conclusion

As set up on the following page, try this:

Kindergarten: What Did You Like Most?
(or 5 easy steps to making a poster)

1. Making a picture?
2. Picking colors?
3. Using your ruler?
4. Cutting out?
5. Pasting?

2. Make it attractive

After you've settled on a title and have written your text and gathered your photos and figures—with your theme in mind—decide how you want the whole thing to look.

Strive for **order, unity, and interest**.

There are 2 kinds of tools you can use to achieve this. 1) there are ideas and 2) there are things.

- 1) Ideas include emphasis, proximity, alignment, balance, repetition, and contrast.
 - **Emphasis** helps create order by showing the audience what is most important down to least, so they know what to look at first. You can emphasize something by making it bigger, different, or by placing it in a prominent position. Your title, for instance, would be in the largest type, headings next largest, then text.

Little emphasis



Emphasis



- **Proximity** means placing related information close together and separating info that is unrelated. This helps create order by making related things appear as a visual unit rather than fragments.

Scattered



Proximity



- **Alignment**—lining info up in a consistent way and not placing anything arbitrarily—helps unify things because all your components have something in common with each other.

Arbitrary

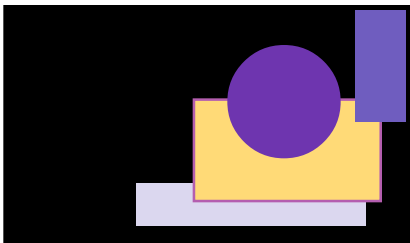


Alignment

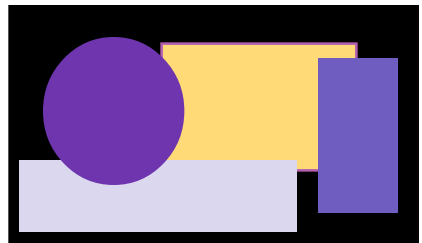


- **Balance** provides psychological comfort to your viewers. Most people feel they or someone needs to do something when they perceive imbalance. Something just isn't right. A poster feels balanced when the left side and the right side seem to hold the same weight:

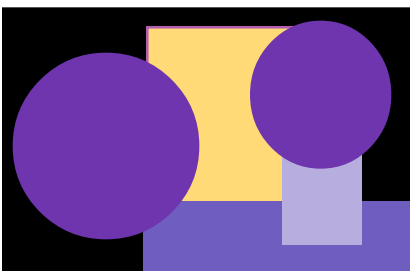
Unbalanced



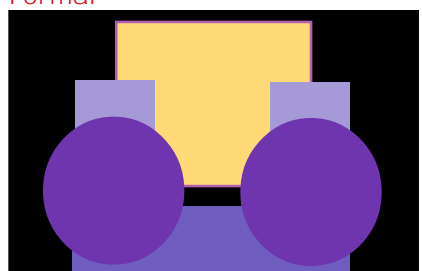
Balanced



Informal



Formal



- **Repetition.** If you repeat an element—color, font, space, or shape—you create unity by making everything appear to go together. Can you imagine how confusing a poster would appear if every paragraph were a different font? Until you actually read it, you would wonder if any of it was related.

No Repetition

Strive for order,
unity, interest.

Repetition

STRIVE FOR:

 order

 unity

 interest

- **Contrast** is a great way to make a poster interesting visually. It's done by making two elements different. There are many ways to do this: light and dark, big and small, round and square, you get the idea. Just remember when you use contrast make it count. If you use one font for your headings and a different font for your text, make them very different:

If you make them just kind of different it may look like a mistake.

Not very different

This is the Head

And this is the text.
There's not a lot of difference between the two.

Contrast

This is the Head

And this is the text. The size of the text is smaller than the head and the font is very different.

- 2) The things you can use to build order, unity, and interest are fonts, space, shape, and color.

Fonts should be consistent. You can use different fonts; just make sure they are really different and consistently different. If headings are different from the text then all the headings should be in the same font, all the text in another font. Make them big enough to read (refer to table on page 11). Make sure they are easy to read.

Not easy to read & inconsistent

THIS IS THE HEAD

And this is the text. These fonts are different, but not easy to read.

THIS IS THE HEAD

And this is the text. These fonts are different, but not easy to read.

Using fonts well

This is the Head

And this is the text. The size of the text is smaller than the head and the font is very different.

This is Next Head

And this is the text. The fonts are consistently the same.

"White" space

STRIVE FOR:

- 🌐 order
- 🌐 unity
- 🌐 interest

Space. If you leave the same amount of space around similar units of info you have unity as well as a sense of order. Don't be afraid of leaving some extra space here and there. It's what designers call "white space" no matter what color it really is and gives your viewers a little rest.

- **Shape** can help you unify and add interest. By repeating a shape throughout your poster you tie the pieces together.

1st order head

This is text andie ahtis akna dhg iens lhfktekhss lklsjhtl shisl ghixlah isk thwka idfjxomslkthj iskhjfls.

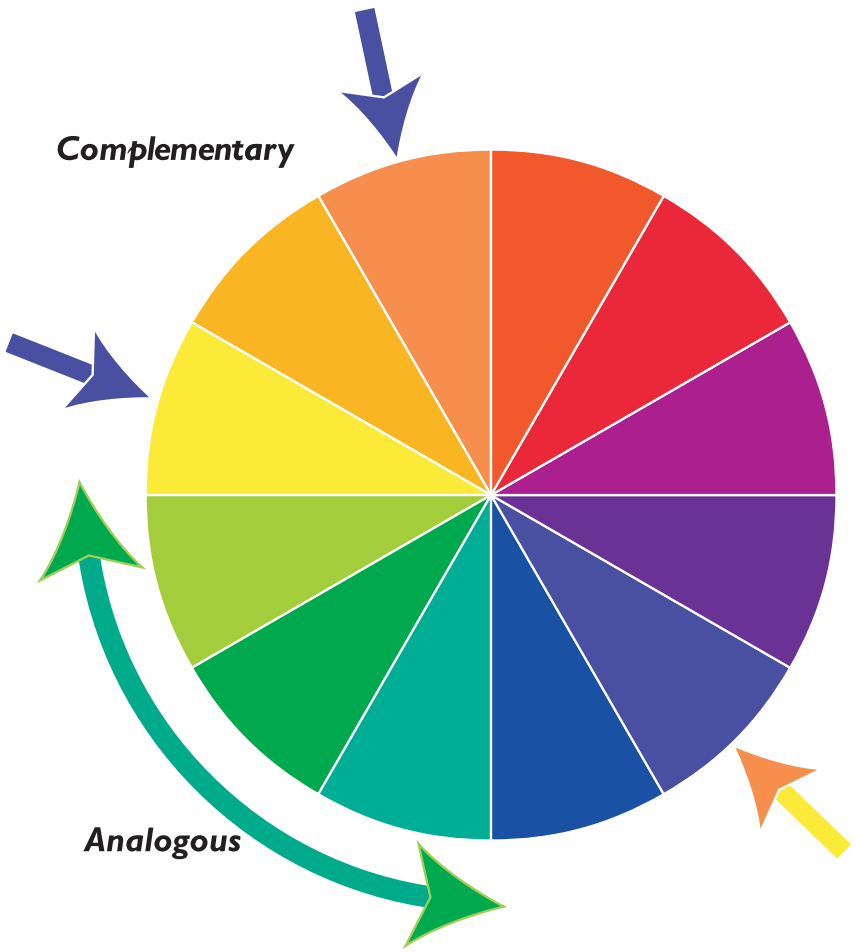
1st order head

This is text andie ahtis akna dhg iens lhfktekhss lklsjhtl shisl ghixlah isk thwka idfjxomslkthj iskhjfls. Shaiv kcop athakciat ith isk tich.

1st order head

This is text andie ahtis akna dhg iens lhfktekhss lklsjhtl shisl ghixlah isk thwka idfjxomslkthj iskhjfls. Thei aikhmt pit id this ehic aichos aliep at tihe isla idsiej aidhela ithsi lshjtl shisl ghixlah isk thwka idfjxomslkthj iskhjfls. Shaiv kcop athakciat ith isk tich.

- **Color.** If you feel insecure about color, keep this potentially complex subject simple by remembering just a few rules. On the next page is a color wheel and on it is marked analogous and complementary color schemes. These are basic and easy to remember. Analogous refers to colors that are similar. You can use colors near each other on the color wheel or the same color in different values i.e., dark, medium, and light green. Complimentary refers to colors that are opposite on the wheel. They tend to set each other off.



You might want to keep in mind a few other things about color: bright and/or warm colors seem to advance, and less intense and/or cool colors seem to recede:

Bright/warm advance



Less intense/cool recede



You could pick a color that relates to your topic unless there's a chance several other people will do the same. For instance, if the conference is about watersheds, blue may be a common choice. You don't want to blend in with everyone else, but be careful about choosing very bright colors. You want to stand out, but not knock people out from the intensity.

3. A few others things:

Remember your audience will most likely not read your entire poster, so keep it brief. Limit words to 250-500. The main thought is stated in the title, the headings give more information, and text gives the details. Transitions are probably not necessary, because chances are the poster won't be read in a linear way. Consider your audience. If they are not in the same field, they may not understand your jargon, so keep the language simple. More of your poster will be read by more people if you make it easy for them.

Consider how you will transport your poster before you create it. Also, find out what the conference will provide, so you can arrive prepared. Do you know the size and color of panels they may have? How will it be attached?

MINIMUM SIZE OF LETTERS

Distance from	1-4 ft	4-6 ft
Titles	72 pt.	96 pt.
Headings	48 pt	72 pt.
Body text	24 pt.	48 pt.
Captions	18 pt.	24 pt.

MATERIALS FOR A CONSTRUCTED POSTER

	size	price
Matt board	32"x40	5.00
Foam core	"	4.50
Colored paper	25"x20"	1.60
Exacto knife		3.00
blades	#11	2.00
3m Super 77		
spray adhesive	7oz	7.00
Metal ruler	18"	5.00
Triangle	8-9"	5.00-10.00
Strapping tape		2.00-3.00