

Preparation Guidelines for Poster Sessions TESOL Convention

Your poster session is scheduled for 1 hour and 15 minutes. During that time, attendees will come and go, but they should be able to understand your poster's concepts without further explanation. The cork board on which each poster will be mounted is 4 feet by 8 feet—your display must fit inside the wood frame so it should be smaller than the dimensions of 4 by 8.

Type and Text

Because a poster is a visual communication genre, you should limit the amount of text. Where you do include text, it must be formatted to make it easy to read.

- Text should be readable from 3–6 feet away.
- Using upper and lower case is preferable to using upper case only. The shapes of words are more readily recognized in lower case.
- Use a sans-serif font and put title and headings in **bold**; for example:

Having Fun at TESOL (Arial font, bold)

This guideline document is written primarily in Calibri, which is a sans-serif font. This sentence is in Times New Roman, a serif font (note the tails on the ends of each letter), and is *not* appropriate for a poster because it is more difficult to read from a distance.

- The best font size for the title is 90–200 points.
- Headings should be 36–54 points.
- Body text should be 24–36 points; for example:

We asked the following questions about having fun at TESOL (24 point, Arial)

For the actual lettering of the titles and text, you can use whatever medium is available to you: computer-generated type or cut-out, stencil, or rub-on letters are all effective. Hand-lettering, however, looks unprofessional; computer-generated type is preferred.

Remember that the amount of text should be limited. (If you feel stymied by the text constraint, you can put together an epic handout, although that is not encouraged.) Phrases with bullet points (and in parallel grammatical construction!) are much better than complete sentences:

For example:

Too Much Text	Better
The term “socioacademic relationships” was used by Leki (2007) in a longitudinal study of the literacy development of multilingual, multicultural undergraduates to denote social interactions between her focal students, their peers, and faculty members “that proved to be critical to the students’ sense of satisfaction with their educational work and sometimes even to the possibility of doing that work” (p. 14).	“Socioacademic relationships” (Leki, 2007): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Were critical social interactions between university students, peers, and faculty• Affected students’ academic work

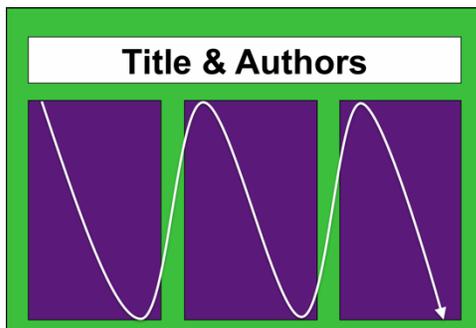
Source: J.S. Wilson, TESOL 2012 presentation.

Poster Design

Layout

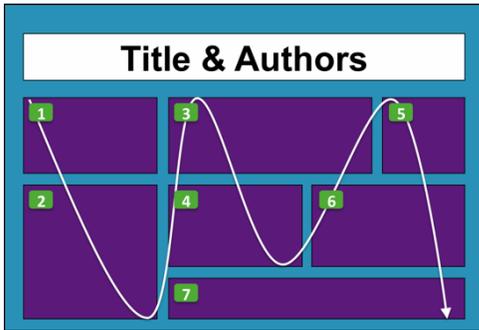
Although the left-to-right (L-to-R) flow pattern (see below) is a typical layout for a poster presentation, other patterns are sometimes used. Select the most appropriate pattern based on the content of your presentation as well as the viewing pattern of your audience.

L-to-R Flow in Vertical Columns



Column formats are easy to read when there is a crowd in front of the poster.

L-to-R Flow Variations



Use organizational cues (numbers, letters, and arrows) to guide your audience.

L-to-R Flow in Rows



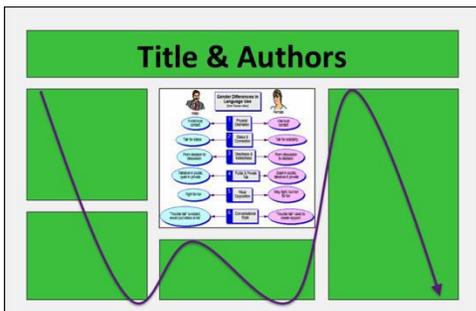
Present news or information in this format—flow is left to right and top to bottom.

Two Fields in Contrast



Use this flow to compare and contrast subjects or images such as Old vs. New or different programs.

Centered Image and Explanations



This format is good for demonstrating a key concept: Place a key image or graphic in the center and place explanations on the sides or all around it.

Illustrations and Images

- Use photos or other images that are large enough to allow attendees to see them without standing right next to the poster.
- Keep all illustrations simple and bold.
- Try to make all charts and tables into bold graphic color displays where the text is minimized and the symbols are maximized.
- Cite images appropriately.

Charts

PowerPoint chart defaults are often ineffective:

- Avoid “chart junk” and keep it simple: Get rid of anything that adds unnecessary clutter, such as grid lines, 3-D effects, and shadows.
- Label each element directly instead of relying on the graph legend.
- Default text size is often too small; increase the point size of text manually.

Example 1

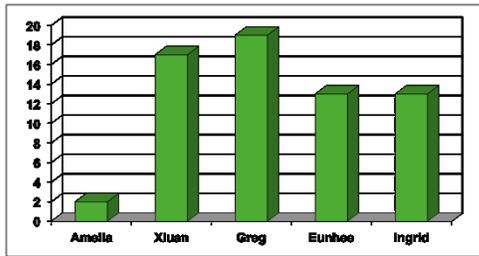
Student Improvement					
Student	Fall 10	Spring 11	Fall 11	Spring 12	Total
Amelia	-18%	7%	25%	2%	2%
Xiuan	47%	-7%	26%	15%	17%
Greg	16%	-5%	1%	7%	19%
Eunhee	57%	10%	-3%	7%	13%
Ingrid	57%	57%	-3%	7%	13%

- The title is too general.
- There are no visual cues to signal what is significant.
- Values are not centered.
- Too many grid lines are distracting.

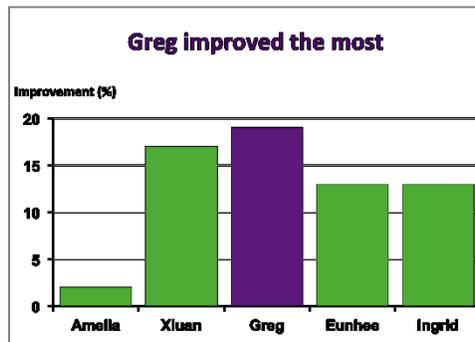


Students improved the most in Fall 2010					
Student	Fall 10 (%)	Spring 11 (%)	Fall 11 (%)	Spring 12 (%)	Total (%)
Amelia	-18	7	25	2	2
Xiuan	47	-7	26	15	17
Greg	16	-5	1	7	19
Eunhee	57	10	-3	7	13
Ingrid	57	57	-3	7	13

Example 2



- Borders and 3-D effects are distracting.
- There are too many grid lines and too many values on the Y axis.
- There is too much space between bars.



Poster Production

The most commonly used software applications for producing posters are PowerPoint, Adobe Illustrator, Keynote, and Adobe InDesign. In general, PowerPoint is the easiest to learn and use.

In PowerPoint, you will create a blank presentation, then change the size of the slide under "Page Setup." A common size for a research poster is 48" x 36".

- If your poster has dimensions larger than 54", you have to create it at a scaled down size. For example, for a 48" x 72" poster, you would create a 24" x 36" poster and then ask the printer to scale it by 200% when printing.
- The ruler, grid, and guidelines are useful tools to use to help you place text and images where you want them and to keep them aligned.

To print your poster in PowerPoint, you will need to find a shop (e.g., FedEx or UPS) with a plotter printer. If you are affiliated with a university, your school may have a computer lab or media center with a plotter printer.

If you are not able to create or print your poster using PowerPoint, you may create each element separately. The corkboard on which you will be mounting your poster display does not make an attractive backing, so you will want to create a more appealing background. An attractive

background can be fashioned easily from construction paper, bulletin board paper (made for this purpose), or solid color wrapping paper or fabric. If you are using separate elements, before the day of the presentation you should practice laying them out in their proper places and draw a diagram to help you assemble the elements quickly on the day of the presentation.

It's a good idea to carry your display on the plane to avoid the losing it in transit; check with your airline for the carry-on specifications. If you have your poster printed on a single, large sheet of paper, you have only one element to pack: roll it up, ideally in a poster tube. Otherwise, break your display down into elements that can be carried easily. If some elements are fragile or need to be protected, you may want to have them laminated.

Final Tips

- Proofread your poster at least twice *and* have someone else proofread it for you.
- Use a consistent font style and size large enough to read from several feet away.
- Use white space and an uncluttered design to emphasize the subject matter.
- Employ a straightforward organization or flow.
- Avoid patterned or multi-colored backgrounds.
- Do not pin up page of a report or paper; that is **not** a proper poster display.

Handouts for poster sessions should be prepared to address the basic concepts of your poster. A handout should not be more than one page, front and back, and should have the presenter's contact name and email address for follow-up questions. Follow the instructions in your acceptance letter to upload your handout before the convention.

If you have any questions about presenting at the TESOL convention, please contact [TESOL Conference Services](#).

Revised September 2013, courtesy of the [Center for Written, Oral, & Visual Communication](#), Rice University.