

Tips for Poster Preparation from AgEcon Search

Presenting a poster at the Joint Annual Meeting? Consider creating it in PowerPoint. Creating colorful, professional-looking posters can be accomplished with software you probably have on your computer in the office or at home. PowerPoint can be used to produce documents large and small, and its features allow the inclusion and manipulation of graphs, photos, and other visuals.

In a nutshell, you make a single, giant slide that is the size of your poster, and send it to a large scale printer or plotter.

Getting started—Using a template or starting from scratch

There are two ways to begin your poster. Either use a free template found on the Web or create your own, inserting text boxes, graphics, and other features.

A number of Web sites offer templates for poster presentations. One commonly used example is <http://postersession.com> and others may be found by searching the Web for relevant terms (ex., PowerPoint, poster, template). One advantage of using a template is having a layout done for you.

To start a poster from scratch, open a new blank presentation with a blank content layout. To get the right size, go to the File menu, and select Page Setup. Under “Slides Sized For,” select “Custom,” and fill in the length and width in inches. If your size is larger than PowerPoint will accommodate, make it half as big, and print it at 200%.

On the blank slide, insert text boxes, clip art, and "pictures," which may be any graphic you have saved to a file, including photos, graphs, tables, and so on. Backgrounds, in the form of solids, designs, or photos, may be added, and text and fill colors may also be adjusted.

Design considerations

Posters that convey your ideas and stimulate conversation with colleagues may be aided by particular design features:

- *Light backgrounds, white space, good contrast
- *A focal point and clear path for readers to follow
- *A minimum of large text blocks, using alternatives when possible
- *Rich graphics that convey results or conclusions

Using only one or two fonts is also recommended. The suggested sizes are:

Title: 90-150 point, bold

Author: 36-42 point, bold

Section headings: 36-48 point, bold

Main text: 28-32 point

References: 18-28 point

Tips on graphics

PowerPoint allows a user to incorporate a myriad of graphics into a poster, but there are a few points to consider.

In addition to their copyright considerations, graphics from the Web may not scale up well. Although PowerPoint has the capacity to let you create graphs, charts, and tables, it is rather rudimentary, so most users create them in another type of software, such as Excel, and insert them.

Printing hints

It may be prudent to investigate where you will be printing a poster before the design begins, since not every printing facility has the capability, and many that do have policies regarding large documents.

Find out if the printer can handle the size you need. Ask if they will provide a draft print, so you can really see the poster in its full size, and be sure the graphics blow up well. They may require that the file be in PDF format, so that no changes occur because of varying software versions or variations in monitors.

Many of the groups that provide free templates also offer printing services.

Julie Kelly, jkelly@umn.edu
AgEcon Search Co-coordinator
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/>