Preparation Guidelines for Poster Sessions
TESOL Convention

Poster sessions are scheduled for a 1 hour, 15 minute time slot each day of the convention. The audience should be able to understand the poster's concept even if the presenter is not standing beside the display. The cork board on which each poster will be mounted is 4x8 – your display must fit inside the wood frame so should be <u>smaller</u> than the dimensions of 4x8.

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 accessible for viewers.

<u>Best practices:</u>

- 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)

  o This guideline document is written primarily in Times New Roman, which is a serif font (note the tails on the ends of each letter) and is *not* appropriate for a poster.

- The best type size for the title is between 90 and 200 point.
  o Headings should be 36-54 point.
  o Body text should be 24-36 point; for example:

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

As 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 looks unprofessional; computer-generated type is preferred.

Remember that the amount of text <u>should be limited</u>. (If you feel stymied by the text constraint, you can put together an epic handout, although that is not encouraged.) Phrases in 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): • Were critical **social** interactions between university students, peers, and faculty • Affected students' **academic** work

(source: J.S. Wilson, TESOL 2012 presentation)

Poster Design

<u>Layout</u>

While the L-to-R flow pattern (see below) is a typical layout for poster presentation, there are other patterns from which to choose. 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
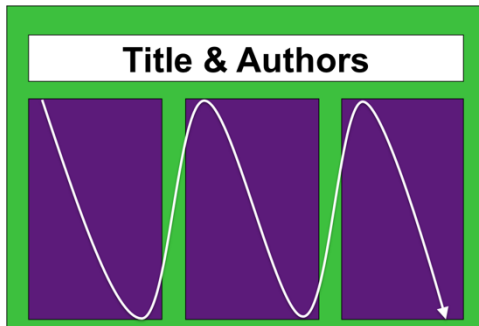
Column formats are easy to read when there is a crowd in front of the poster.

- L-to-R flow variations
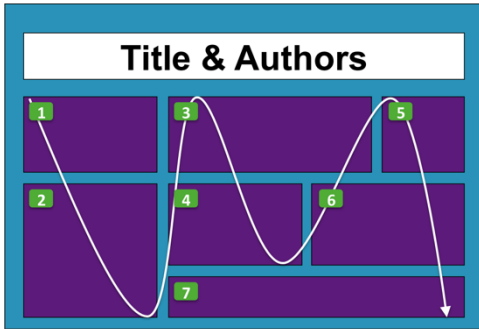
Use organizational cues (numbers, letters, and arrows) to guide your audience.

- 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 to compare and/or 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 with explanations on the sides or all around the central graphic or image.

Illustrations and Images

Best practices:

- Use photos or other images that are large enough to be seen 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.
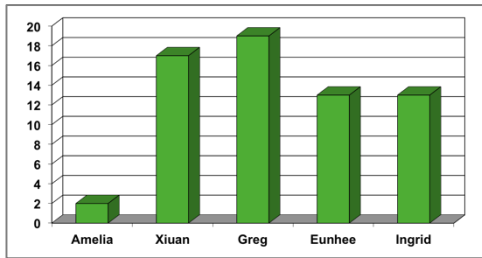
- Borders and 3-D effects are distracting.
- There are too many grid lines and too many values on the Y-axis.
- There is too much space between bars.
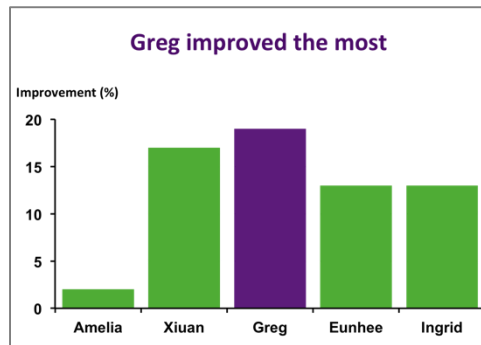
Poster Production

There are various computer programs available for producing posters: The most commonly used software applications are PowerPoint, Adobe Illustrator, Keynote, and Adobe InDesign. In general, PowerPoint is the easiest to learn/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 in PowerPoint 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 to be and to keep them aligned.

If you create your poster in PowerPoint, you can take it to Fedex Kinko's or another printer to have it printed as a poster. If you are affiliated with a university, your school may have a computer lab or media center with a plotter printer for printing posters.

If you are not able to create or print your poster using PowerPoint, you may create each element separately. The cork board on which you will be mounting your poster display

does not make an attractive backing, so creating a background greatly enhances your display. An attractive background can be fashioned easily from construction paper, bulletin board paper (made for this purpose), or <u>solid color</u> wrapping paper or fabric. If you are using separate elements, *before* the day of the presentation you should practice laying them out in the correct order; we encourage you to draw a diagram showing the order in which each element should be placed on the board to help you quickly assemble the pieces.

A major benefit of having your poster printed on a single, large sheet of paper is that you have only one element to pack. You will want to roll it up, ideally in a poster tube. Otherwise, be sure that your display breaks down into elements that can be carried easily, and you may want to laminate the parts that are fragile or which need to be protected. It's a good idea to carry your display onto the plane in order to avoid the lost luggage syndrome – check with your airline for the carry-on specifications.

Final Tips

- Proofread your poster at least twice, *and* have someone else proofread it for you, too.
- Use a consistent font style and size large enough to be 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.

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 contact name and email address of the presenter(s) for follow-up questions about the poster. Follow the instructions in your acceptance letter to upload your handout to the Precis system.

Do not just pin up pages of a report or paper; this is <u>not</u> considered a proper poster display.

(rev. September 2013, courtesy of the Rice University Center for Written, Oral, & Visual Communication)

Poster layouts ©Dr. Tracy Volz, 2011