

Microsoft PowerPoint: Creating Academic Posters

Why a poster?

Posters are widely used in the academic community, and most conferences include poster presentations in their program. Research posters summarise information or research concisely and attractively to help publicise it and generate discussion. The poster is usually a mixture of a brief text mixed with tables, graphs, pictures, and other presentation formats.

Before you start

Plan your poster

Before you even open PowerPoint it's a good idea to get out pen and paper and gather all your thoughts. Brainstorm your topic and organise your ideas into sections. Once you're confident in your content, start to sketch out how you would like your poster to look (Post-its can be a great help!):

- What are your headings?
- How much text do you want to display?
- Where do you want to place images to support your text?
- Are you going to use charts or SmartArt?



Set up your page size in PowerPoint

1. Click the **Design** tab
2. Choose **Slide size** (far right)
3. Choose **Custom slide size**
4. Enter the **width** and **height** dimensions you need
5. Change **orientation** if required (the default is landscape)

Standard paper sizes:

- A5 = 21cm x 14.8cm
- A4 = 29.7cm x 21cm
- A3 = 42cm x 29.7cm
- A2 = 59.4cm x 42cm
- A1 = 84.1cm x 59.4cm
- A0 = 118.9cm x 84.1cm

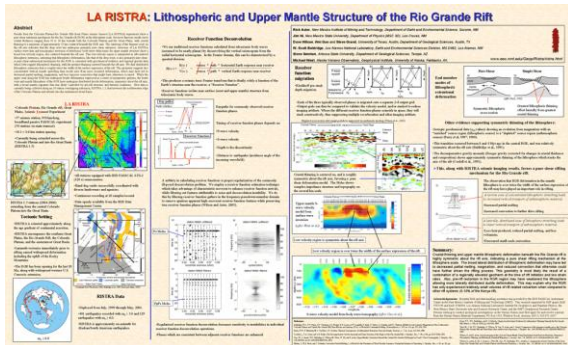
Clear unwanted layout to obtain a blank poster

1. Select the **HOME** tab
2. Select Layout and select blank

How should your poster look?

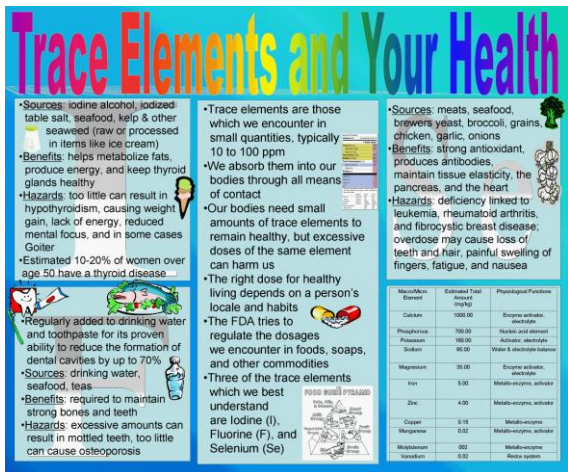
Your poster should work as a standalone item, with text flowing through in a logical manner.

Consider the three example below:



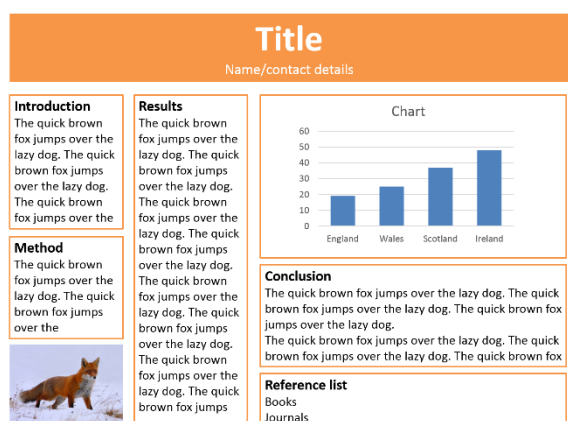
Avoid any confusion...

- Don't have large amounts of text – be concise
- If your text is too small, your audience won't read it
- Avoid complex graphics and charts
- Don't mix justified, centred and left aligned text
- Use headings



Carefully consider colours and images...

- Avoid rainbow colours - always use solid colours and not more than two or three in the poster
- Avoid clipart and cartoon images
- Be careful with images (or in this case) letters behind text
- Use clear headings



Be clear and consistent...

- Clear title and headings
- Logical sequence
- Consistent alignment and colours
- Good quality images - no clipart or cartoons
- Simple, clear chart
- Text boxes and images are aligned

Summary

- Title should be short, meaningful and draw interest
- Important information should be readable from about 3 metres away
- Word count of about 300 to 800 words
- Text should be clear, brief and concise
- Make use of bullets, numbering, and headings to help guide your audience
- Use good quality and effective graphics, colours and fonts (no cartoons or clipart!)
- Use a consistent and clean layout
- Include your name, references (and institution on conference posters)

Design considerations

You might want to add some colour to your poster by either adding a border or changing the background colour. If you change the background colour, think about how this might affect any images, charts and SmartArt that you are going to add.

Insert a border

1. Click the **Insert** tab
2. Choose **shapes** and **Rectangle** to insert a rectangle on to the slide
3. **Resize** the rectangle to cover the slide by dragging the **corner handles**
4. With the rectangle selected, click **Align**, then **Align Centre** and **Align Middle**
5. Click the **Format** tab of your **Drawing Tools**
6. To change the rectangle's line colour, on the **Format** tab, click **Shape Outline** and choose a **colour**
7. Click **Shape Fill** and choose **No Fill**
8. To create a double border, again click **Shape Outline**, but this time choose **Weight> More Lines** to open the **Format Shape** dialog box with the **Line Style** category displayed
9. Choose a **width** suitable for the size of your poster.
10. From the **Compound Type** drop-down list, choose one of the double line types.

Change the background colour

1. Click the **Design** tab
2. Select **Format Background**
3. With **Solid Fill** selected, choose a **Fill Colour**

Add your Content

Insert Text using text boxes

1. Click the **Insert** tab and select the **Text Box** icon. Drag a text box across the top of the poster. Don't worry that it doesn't pay attention to the height when you drag; it will adjust when you add text
2. Start **typing**
3. Select the text and From the **Font Size** drop-down list, choose a suitable font size. With the text still selected, choose a suitable font colour from the **Font Colour** drop-down list.
4. Select your text box and click the **Format** tab of your **Drawing Tools**

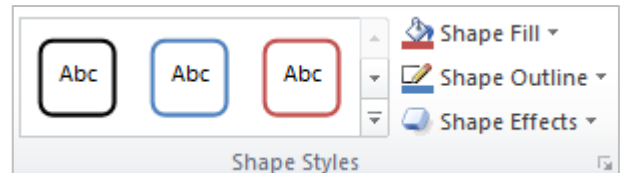
5. **Align** the text box to **Centre, Top or bottom** as required

Suggested font size

For a large poster (A1 or A0), to be read from a distance of about 1 metre, your standard text size should be around **20 points**, subheadings around **24-28 points** and main heading **30+ points**. These sizes are flexible, depending on the effect you want to create.

Format the text box

1. Select the text box
2. Click the **format** tab of the **Drawing Tools**
3. Click **Shape Fill** to change the fill colour, or choose No Fill
4. Click **Shape Outline** to change the outline colour or weight
5. Choose **Shape Effects** to add effects such as a shadow



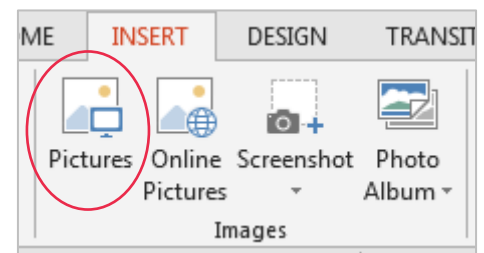
Insert an image saved to your computer

1. On the **Insert** tab, click **Pictures**
2. Browse to find your picture and select it and click **Insert**


Insert a picture from a Web page (e.g. Flickr.com)

Images from web pages aren't always copyright cleared, so make sure you reference them.

1. On the Web page, right-click the picture that you want, and then click **Save Picture As** on the shortcut menu
2. Enter the name that you want in the **File name** box, and then click **Save**
3. Click on the **Insert** tab, click **Pictures**
4. Locate the picture that you saved in step 2, and then click **Insert**.



Format your picture

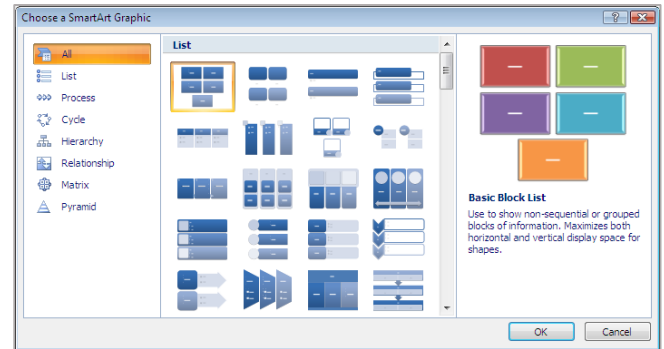
1. Click on the picture to **select** it
2. Click the **Format** tab of your **Picture Tools**
3. From the Picture Styles gallery, choose an appropriate style.
4. To see more Picture Styles, click the **More** button. 

The SmartArt Gallery

You can use SmartArt to show information visually, for example processes, cycles and lists. There are seven main categories of SmartArt graphics that you can select from. A preview and description will be displayed for each diagram that you point to in the list.

To insert a SmartArt image:

1. Click on the **Insert** tab and then on the **SmartArt** button
2. Select a category in the left-hand pane
3. Click on a layout in the middle pane, click **OK**
4. Enter the relevant text



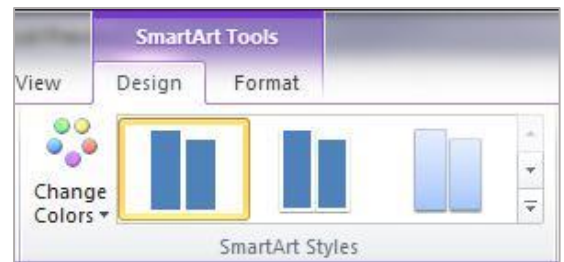
Format your SmartArt

Change the colours of an entire SmartArt graphic

You can apply colour variations that are derived from the theme colours to the shapes in your SmartArt graphic.

1. Click your SmartArt graphic
2. Under **SmartArt Tools**, on the **Design** tab, in the **SmartArt Styles** group, click **Change Colors**

Note: If you don't see the **SmartArt Tools** or **Design** tabs, make sure that you've selected a SmartArt graphic. You may have to double-click the SmartArt graphic to open the **Design** tab.



3. Click the colour variation that you want

Apply a SmartArt Style to a SmartArt graphic

A SmartArt Style is a combination of various effects, such as line style, bevel, or 3-D, that you can apply to the shapes in your SmartArt graphic to create a unique and professionally designed look.

1. Click your SmartArt graphic.
2. Under **SmartArt Tools**, on the **Design** tab, in the **SmartArt Styles** group, click the SmartArt Style that you want
3. To see more SmartArt Styles, click the **More** button .