

Research Poster Presentation—Design and Pitch

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Visual Basics

Posters are summaries of a research project.

The traditional paper-and-board research poster is a static, visual medium used to communicate information about a research project. Because of the limited physical space allotted—regardless of the “size” of the board—and because most people seldom read a poster longer than five minutes, posters need to be concise and clear but also illustrate or describe the most significant portion of the research or project. A poster cannot convey ALL the research, information or data (this could be done in a different medium such as a report or article).

Posters are a form of visual communication.

Presenters should take care what the posters say in graphical language (color, font size and type, layout, infographics, graphs, charts) as much as what it says in alphabetic text. Posters are also usually presented in a context of a conference or symposium, competing against many other posters—so, it is important that posters actively draw the attention of viewers/audiences through clear layout and graphic design; effective layout and design also helps the viewer retain information and makes the poster memorable.

Posters can do “all the talking,” “some of the talking,” or “highlights the talking.”

The amount of content in a poster depends on whether (and to what degree) the speaker(s) present with the poster. While at some conferences posters stand alone, in many cases, research posters are presented alongside a presenter or a team of presenters. In some cases, the speaker never leaves the poster.

Poster: “all the talking” / “some talking”

Poster alone / Poster with speaker(s) part time

Poster: “little” or “just highlights”

Poster always with speaker(s)

Poster Objectives:

- Convey research/project/data clearly and succinctly
- Interest and engage people visually and graphically
- Make research or project memorable (with/without presenter)

Design Tips

Prioritize and order information

1. Convey hierarchy of information through space (real-estate of page).
2. Convey salience through scale (size) of sections, images, visualizations: bigger the size, the more important the info.

Organize path of reading for audience

1. Provide clear order of viewing using colors, shapes, and lines.
2. Make the path of reading logical but interesting.
3. Provide clear, engaging titles and descriptive subheadings.
4. Visualize structure of your argument: break up long paragraphs so that main points have their own paragraph.

Represent data relationships with graphics and images

1. Select visualizations such as tables, graphs, diagram, maps, images, or timelines that best represent the relationships of data or information. Are you representing quantitative values, spatial relationships, patterns, or temporal sequence?
2. Clarify graphics with text that describes purpose and meaning.

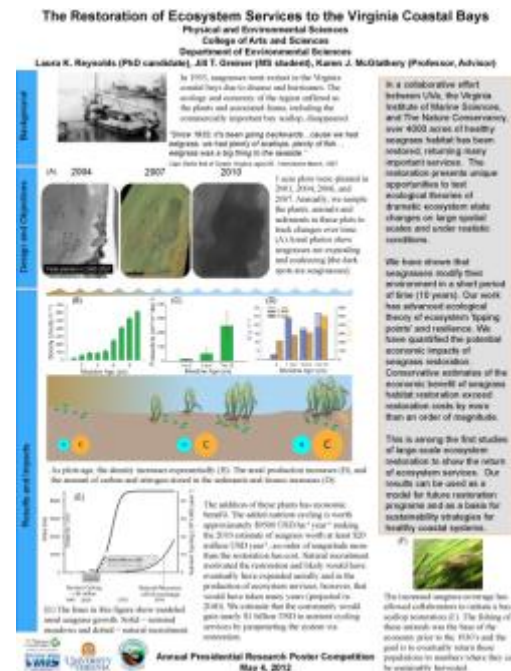


Fig. 1. Laura Reynolds, “The Restoration of Ecosystem Services to the Virginia Coastal Bays” Research Poster. University of Virginia. May 4, 2012.

Oral Basics

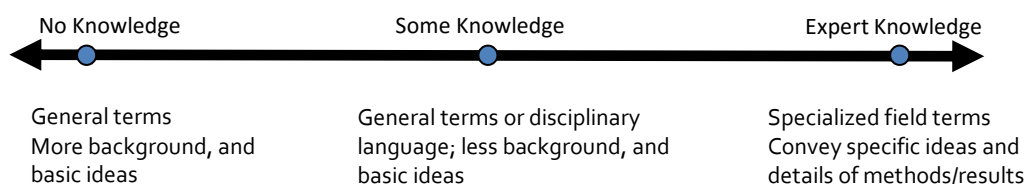
Pitches are summaries of research projects.

Pitches may last 30 seconds or go on as long as 3-5 minutes (depending on the interest of the audience), so pitches need to be clear, concise, and captivating. The goal is to clearly relate the research problem you faced, identify issues and the solution and make it relevant to your audience, including a “take home” message(s).

There are two steps in a pitch:

- 1) **Hook** (or one-line elevator pitch), which includes “what” and the “so what.” Goal is to create interest!
- 2) **Expanded pitch** (up to several minutes) that explains background, research problem, results/solution, and relevance.

Audience Types: Audience varies in a poster session. Modulating your pitch for different audiences (general audience, field-specific audience, or disciplinary expert audience) allows you to successfully convey your research to a larger group.



Oral Objectives:

- Grab attention through a hook and convey research succinctly (3 min or less).
- Engage audience through voice, energy, non-verbal cues (eye contact, gestures).
- Provide a concrete take-home message. People get a lot of information in a poster session, so clearly identify one or two take-aways.

Oral Tips

Recognize audience- Modulate if possible:

1. Read name tags (if any).
2. Ask a question about their background in the field.

Filter terminology and background information

1. Determine terminology use (field jargon, disciplinary language, or plain English) by audience knowledge.
2. Explain in plain English and use more background for a general audience.

Adjust hook and take-home message

1. Prepare hook and research “take home” for general audience (no or some knowledge).
2. Prepare hook and research “take home” for specialized audience (expert knowledge).

Oral Practice

(Pitching to Audience on your own topic)

Develop a 2 min pitch

3 minutes drafting 2 sentences each (#1-3):

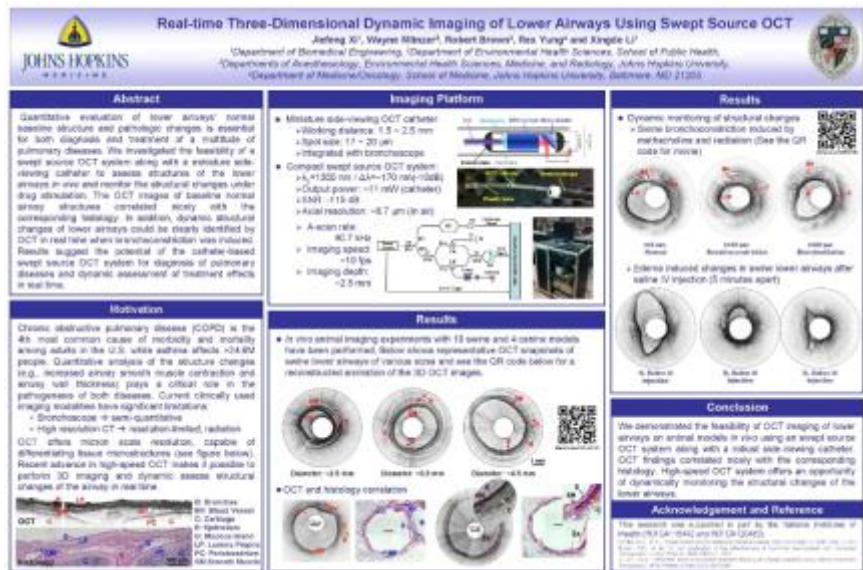
- 0- **Greet & ask filtering question.**
- 1- **Hook! Get people interested.** (What do you want me to learn?)
- 2- **Problem, issues.** (What is it about?)
- 3- **Solution and So what?** (What is your solution and why is it important?)

Practice your pitch within teams- 2 mins

Give feedback – 1 min each

POSTER LAYOUT: “NEWSPAPER COLUMN” MODEL

- *For this layout, the process of reading involves following the path of the columns.* In this case, the first column sets up the problem. Methods, Materials, and Results take up most of the visual space of the poster. This model applies “transparent” design approach in which graphic design elements (colors, font, lines, shapes) primarily supplement data content.
- *Visuals, graphs, charts* illustrate research points and are usually *subordinate* to the text.
- *Colors* blue and white are used to unify the title, subheadings. The violet, purple, reds, black are used only in the chart, visuals, and images.
- *QR code:* notice the use of the QR code—to extends engagement through interactivity but also include more information outside the poster space.

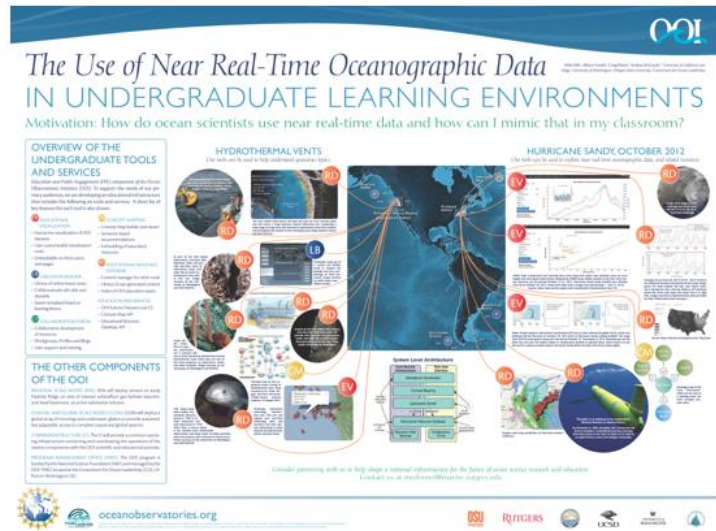


Sketch a column poster. Draw a rough outline of columns and “boxes” you want, leaving room for diagrams or other visuals. Provide your own subheadings for the eight elements of the poster. For poster elements visit researchposter.tumblr.com



POSTER LAYOUT: VISUALIZATION MODEL

- *In this layout, the eye is drawn toward and works around the primary visualization* (diagram-map of six tools and resources to help students learn about Hydrothermal Vents and Hurricane Sandy: EV, educational visualization; LB, lab builder; CP collaboration portal; CM concept mapping; RD educational resource database). The design highlights an **“opaque” design approach** in which the visualization organizes and relates findings; it presents relationships of the data (here, spatial location of events and data that can be used in classrooms).
- *Scale, color, and font type* in the title focuses the message, directs eye.
- *Repetition in design* unifies poster: Circles that identify the six tools are replicated in the circle-shaped photos.



Sketch a visualization poster. First “box” the space for your poster elements, leaving most of the poster for visualizing the “solution” and convey information visually. Visit researchposter.tumblr.com for visualization types.

