

# The Poster Diva's Seven Rules to Success

National Conference Committee Chair Stacey S. White [University of Kansas] sent out a request for advice on preparing great posters for the Poster Session Reception to be held in Minneapolis for the 2010 ACSP Annual Conference. This came from Poster Diva Dr. Alice Jones, Eastern Kentucky University. She has helped students prepare award winning poster presentations.

1. **HAVE A POINT, AND GET TO IT!** Posters are billboards..... not just "papers" printed out at enormous size.
2. **SHOW DON'T TELL** - Aim for visual elements (maps, graphs, charts, illustrations, photographs) consuming about 2/3 of the total surface area, and text only about 1/3.
3. **REDUCE TEXT** by using bullets and sentence fragments of no more than 25 words (6 - 10 is better!) surrounded by plenty of whitespace.
4. **EMPHASIZE RESULTS**, conclusions/ findings - go easy on literature reviews, methods, and sources, which don't present well in poster format.
5. **CHOOSE FONTS MINDFULLY** and wisely! In general, font sizes should never go below 40 points on a poster, and more than 3 different fonts gets confusing and messy.
6. **MAKE NAVIGATION OBVIOUS** - Use either a "newspaper column" or "billboard" layout and then use color, font size, image size, and even arrows to help the viewer read the poster in the correct order.
7. **KNOW THE AUDIENCE, VENUE and CONTEXT** where the poster will be displayed and/or discussed...and design for that context. There's a big difference between a discussion session with 8-20 posters connected by a common theme in a room where the presenter stands next to the poster for 2 hours and has one-on-one conversations with anywhere from six to two dozen people who are likely at least moderately familiar with the topic...and being one of 200+ posters displayed along every corridor of a conference hotel for three days straight with people strolling by between sessions with coffee in one hand and a laptop case in the other and no opportunity for conversation or discussion.

The conference organizers should make a point of telling potential poster presenters the context in the call for proposals, but if they don't then you should ask!

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