

# Tips to create your conference poster

By Michelle Baker

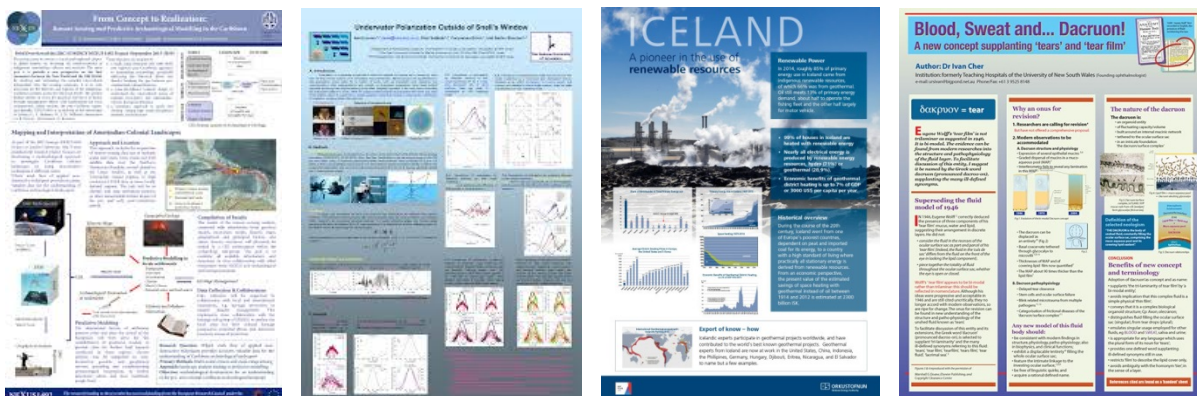
## Stand out from the crowd

Each conference we usually have more than a hundred posters on display in the exhibition space. We serve refreshments in this zone, and delegates will eat, talk and walk through this space. Having a bold poster with clear, simple title and bite-sized elements will attract delegates to read your poster.

Your poster might seem large, but it will look small in the room. Bright blocks of colour and photos like this one will help it to stand out.



In the following line up, which poster attracts your interest?

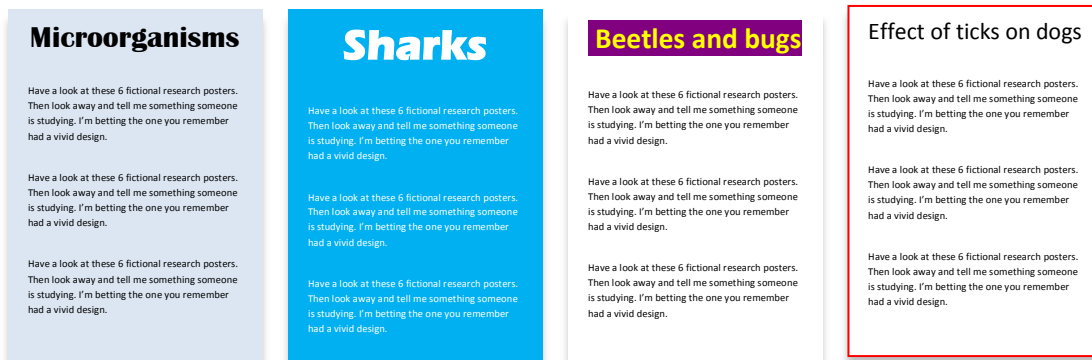


## Be memorable

People might see your poster, and start scanning over its content. But you want them to really **read** your content, **understand** your work and **remember** it.

- Make it easy to read. A conference is information-overload: hundreds of people; scores of presentations; walls of posters all covered in heavy text. Everyone will see your poster, but how many will get past the first few sentences? Will they really **read** it, or just see it?
- Make sure sections and subtitles are clearly differentiated from the rest of the text so that the reader can easily navigate between sections, and to break up the text. Use a different size or colour of font, put a block of colour behind your section titles, or put entire sections into boxes.
- Think of your text as an illustrated abstract. How many words would you put in an abstract? About 250–300? Then that's a good guide to the amount of text you should include. And use lots of images to tell the story! You can source high resolution Creative Commons Free to use images from websites like [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com), or Flickr.com public domain or creative commons license images. Be sure to read licenses carefully – some require attribution for use.

- Feed your reader bite-sized information, one bit at a time. If you do this, they'll **understand** you every step of the way. Leave the details for a different medium (e.g. you could hand out copies of your journal paper, or more detailed notes).
- Most people will spend less than a minute looking at the poster itself (more if you are there to discuss it with them) . How much can you read and absorb in less than a minute? Make sure your key take home message is visible and if they read nothing else they learn an interesting snippet from that message that makes them want to talk to you or find out more
- Vivid design. It's a scientific fact: vivid = memorable. Your colours, layout and language all have potential to be vivid, no matter how dry or technical the topic.
- Have a look at these four fictional research posters. Then look away and try to recall a topic. More often than not, the poster you'll remember was the most vivid.



## Be recognised

Put your photo onto your poster, so people can seek you out. Do you use Twitter and Facebook professionally, during the conference? If so, use a consistent photo so that people can recognise you across different platforms.

## Size

Step back and see your work in the bigger picture. Don't bog down the poster in the details.

- There's a time and a place for everything. Your research is documented in detail in a journal paper; it can be summarised over 20 presentation slides; A poster just uses one page so make sure the message is clear and easy to extract.
- The poster is large (A2-A0) so that it can be read from across the room. To be able to read it from 2m away, the text and pictures have to be large – much larger than you'd expect. Try to see your poster as an A4 page that's been enlarged.
- **TIP:** We spend so much time working up close with A4 documents, that it's hard to design a layout for A0. This is why some people produce posters with a large amount of small text, which is too hard to read in the exhibition space. One strategy is to design your draft poster at A4 size to begin with (a size you're more familiar working with). Once you have a design that's simple and easy to read on an A4 printout, scale your file up to A0 and recheck the design, text and images.

**Resources:** [www.web.uwa.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/623527/Preparing\\_your\\_conference\\_poster.pdf](http://www.web.uwa.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/623527/Preparing_your_conference_poster.pdf)