

LESSON PLAN

STRUCTURE:

Overview

Outcomes

Preparation

Procedure



LESSON NAME: Poster presentation

DURATION: 3 x 60 min

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OVERVIEW

Poster presentations can be an effective way to report findings, present a project or an argument or promote a product, being therefore an important component of many seminars, conferences, congresses, exhibitions and meetings. They are also a highly-used communication tool in the academic community to display research or scientific information.

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand the value of poster presentations, as well as to provide them with the input they need to design an effective poster presentation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

- recognise the importance of poster presentations as an effective and dynamic communication tool.
- analyse and contrast poster presentations.
- recognise the key elements of an effective poster presentation.
- demonstrate and apply their synthesis skills.
- design a poster presentation to express knowledge in a concise and engaging way.

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PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Choose two poster presentations to analyse in class, a very good one and a bad one so that students can easily infer the characteristics of an effective poster presentation.
- Make copies of the printout “Poster Presentation – Guidelines” which can be found on pages 4 - 9 of this lesson plan.
- Get acquainted with the content of the PPT attached to this lesson plan. It can help you go through some steps of this lesson.
- Prepare a classroom with a wall projector, Internet access and several computers.
- Make sure computers have the software students need to create their poster presentations. We recommend Microsoft PowerPoint because it’s free and easy to work with.
- Familiarize yourself with the software students will be using.

PROCEDURE

- Start the lesson by eliciting from students the definition of poster, the different types of posters and their different purposes.
- Ask them if they know what a poster presentation is and if they have ever designed one. If yes, invite them to share their experience. If not, explain what a poster presentation is, what it can be used for and its relevance in today’s world.
- Show them two poster presentations (a very good one and a bad one).
- Ask them which is the best poster in their opinion and why.

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- Analyse the posters as a class. Brainstorm the key elements of an effective poster presentation.
- Arrange students in small groups and challenge them to design a poster presentation about a research they've completed, a project they've taken part in, an experiment they've conducted or any other topic within your curriculum content.
- Hand out the poster presentation guidelines.
- Determine the dimensions and orientation of the posters for uniformity purposes. This is just a recommendation, though. Of course, students can be free to choose them.
- Assist students while designing their poster presentations.
- Have them show their posters to their peers.
- Have the class analyse every poster. Students are not supposed to evaluate their peers' work, but to provide them with constructive feedback by pointing out the strengths of every poster and its room for improvement.
- Have students make all the necessary changes.
- Follow-up activity: Print students' poster presentations and arrange a mock poster presentation at school. Take another class to it or ask a colleague of yours to take his/her students. Require the authors of the posters to stand by their posters to answer any questions their peers might have.



Poster Presentation

GUIDELINES

Poster presentations can be a remarkable tool to promote a product, share knowledge, as well as to present an argument, a project or a research in a visually engaging way. Therefore, nowadays they are a key component of many exhibitions, seminars, congresses and conferences. Although at most meetings presenters are required to stand by their posters, they should be designed so as to be able to stand on their own. Difficult? Not at all! The following tips can help you create an effective poster presentation.

Content

Don't start designing your poster right away. First decide on the content to be included on it and write it down in a summarized way. Bear in mind the purpose of your poster, its target audience so as to provide it with the appropriate scope and depth of content, as well as the place where it will be displayed.

If your goal is to design a research poster, don't forget that its major sections are:

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Materials and methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- References
- Contact information (including QR code)

Sections can of course be merged, but a conclusions section must be included at the bottom of the poster.



Software

Decide which software you're going to use. Microsoft PowerPoint is easy to use and has many poster templates. There are other possibilities such as Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator but they are expensive and require more time to get acquainted with. GIMP or Paint.net are also good options and are free software.

Size

Consider the orientation of your poster. Will it be a square or a rectangular poster? Will it be in portrait or landscape orientation?

Determine the size of your poster. Of course, the size depends on your specific needs, the size guidelines required by the organisers of the event and the place where it will be displayed. Anyway, a bigger size should always be selected as posters are supposed to be read at a distance of at least one metre away.

Template

Decide whether you're going to create a poster from scratch or use a poster template. It's easy to find a free template online. Besides, it can make your task much easier.

If you want to create a poster from scratch, draw out a rough layout sketch to determine the way the information will be displayed. It will facilitate your task later while designing the poster and will allow you to save time. Don't forget to make the most effective use of the space available to you.

Flow

Organise your poster in a way that is easy to follow. The viewer will expect the info to be organised from left to right and top to bottom. If you feel like being creative, make sure you adopt a logical visual strategy. You can guide the viewer, for example, by using numbers, letters or arrows.



White space

Your poster should be fairly well laid out with respect to white space. If you've chosen a poster template, this should not be a problem. However, if you've decided to design a poster from scratch, keep the following tips in mind:

- Divide the sections of your poster logically by using white space. Elements should not be aligned too close together and should be evenly spaced.
- Don't cram your poster with too much text. If there isn't much white space, your poster won't be eye-catching and will be hard to read.
- Try to have 40% of white space.

Fonts

- Keep it simple. Don't use more than 2-3 font styles total. Using many different fonts will make your poster seem confusing and sloppy.
- Choose standard, easy-to-read fonts. Fonts that are too clichéd and distinctive will make your poster look amateurish.

Use sans serif fonts for titles, headings or labels and serif fonts for body text as serif fonts are easier to read at smaller font sizes. Be aware that not every sans serif font goes well with every serif font, so choose fonts that look fine together.

- Keep in mind that a dark font colour on a light background works better.
- Choose a large font size for the title/headings and a smaller size for subheadings but still large enough to differentiate them from the body text. Body copy text and captions must be a smaller size but don't forget that your poster must be readable from 1m away minimum. The poster title should be between 70 and 100 pt, the subheadings around 36 pt, body copy 24 pt and captions 18 pt.

Text

- Don't clutter your poster with too much text. Be concise. Your poster should only have approximately 20% text.
- Don't write long paragraphs. Write short sentences.



- Use bullets and brief phrases instead of sentences whenever possible.
- Keep the text size of each part of the poster balanced and consistent.
- Use bold text for the title and subheadings, italics for captions and regular text for your body copy. Use bold or italics to emphasize certain text or key words, but do it sparingly. Don't underline or use capital letters for emphasis.
- Use one and a half or double spacing between lines of text to increase the legibility of your poster design.
- Use curly quotation marks instead of straight quotation marks.
- Avoid using text in UPPER CASE since it can be very difficult to read.
- Don't use drop shadows for small text because it makes your text seem blurry. Use them for large text like your poster title.

Text alignment

- Centre the poster title along with the subtitles underneath it and captions directly under images, charts and graphs.
- Avoid using justified text as it's often harder to read and might create wide gaps between some words. Actually, when using a large font, left-aligned text is the easiest to read.

Poster title

The title is most important part of your poster. It's supposed to grab the viewers' attention and lure them to read your poster. It should be short and convey the whole idea of your research, project or product.

Images

Illustrations, photos, charts or graphs are one of the most important parts of your poster as well. Apart from making it more appealing, they allow you to communicate your message without using lengthy text. They are also great to explain complex info.

Choose good quality images. Low resolution images might look fine when you look at the entire page on your screen, but they won't when the poster is printed. It would be a good



idea for you to zoom in the image until it fills your monitor screen. If it's too low of resolution, it will look pixelated; therefore, not suitable for your poster.

It's better for you to use your own images. If you download them from the Net, make sure that you only use images that are fully public domain.

Images should be spread evenly over the poster, so don't place them all just on one side of the poster.

As for graphs, you should:

- remove grey backgrounds and grid lines. The grey can make things harder to read and grid lines are overkill.
- avoid using legends. Label directly on graphs/charts so that the viewer can understand the graph/chart in one glance.
- use the same size and scale, especially if they are to be compared.
- remove all non-essential info.

Colours

- Make a limited use of colour. Stick with 2/3 colours.
- Keep text colours consistent throughout your poster, e.g. the colour of the title and subheadings should be same.
- Choose colours that go well together.
- Use a light colour for the background and a dark colour for the text to achieve the highest visibility and readability. A white font on a dark background exhausts the viewers' eyes and a dark font on a dark background is difficult to read.
- Avoid using background images. Apart from making your poster look unprofessional, it might make the text unintelligible.

Logos

If you need to put logos on your poster, place them on the bottom and make them small.



Final considerations

A great poster:

- has a short, sharp and compelling title.
- clearly presents your message in a concise and interesting way.
- is organised in a logical way.
- has a consistent and clean layout.
- clearly makes text stand out against the background.
- has an effective use of visual aids, colours and fonts.
- uses bullet points judiciously.
- can easily be read at a distance of at least 1m away (print the poster on a standard sheet of paper. If you're able to read all of it easily, then you've chosen the right font sizes).

Check if your poster meets the aforementioned criteria. Check your spelling and grammar. Finally, show it to your teacher and peers for constructive feedback. Use it to improve your poster if needed.

GOOD WORK!