

About Poster Sessions

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- **Poster board example (PDF)**

"It's the first poster session I've done. In fact, it's the first time I've done a poster since the 10th grade science fair, which I entered under great duress. I was not looking forward to this one either..."

Do you, too, dread being in a poster session? This is just one comment I received in response to an email questionnaire sent out to participants into poster sessions at AEJMC 2000 in Phoenix. Last August, as I walked through the two poster sessions in which the Advertising Division participated, I was struck by how, at least graphically, the poster sessions seemed a desert with an occasional oasis of a well-presented poster.

A quick content analysis showed that while most (71%) used some color, it generally wasn't used effectively. Many posters used color only in the header, and that was often subdued, for example, a burgundy header might be paired with black body type. Overall, type was way too small. Only 23% of the body type was big enough to read standing a couple of feet away from the poster.

The email follow-up revealed that many of the poster presenters said they received no guidelines. AEJMC has said that poster sessions will be the same format. That means you'll have a freestanding 8' x 4' bulletin board. Pins will be provided, although bringing a few of your own "just in case" is a good precaution. Bring your pages printed out and ready to pin up, but you don't need to bring them on poster board as you did in those science fair days.

While clearly content should be the draw, even the most interesting research at 12-point type won't get noticed. The key is to have great content but present it in such a way that people will stop and see what you've said.

With that in mind, here are a few quick tips to help make you a poster prodigy:

- **Treat it as you would an outdoor board -- be big, bold, and brief.** Those of us in advertising should have an advantage because the same things that make an effective ad will make an effective poster.
- **Think big, really big.** A title in 144-point type may sound huge, but it's really only 2" type, and the capital letters are just over an inch. Remember, you want to attract attention to draw people into your poster. Section heads should be 42 to 48 points. And don't make the body copy too small. Your smallest type should be a minimum of 24 point and 28 point is even better.
- **Rewrite your title as a headline.** Again, use this to draw people in. Adapt your writing style. Use short, informative phrases. Bullet points may be even better. With posters, less is more, especially with text.
- **Use graphics.** When asked what they'd do differently, past poster presenters said repeatedly, "Less text. More tables and graphs." Any illustrations, whether photos or clip art, can make your poster more appealing. And try blowing them up for an interesting dominant element.
- **Add some color.** One way is to take bright construction paper and offset it behind the white paper on which you present your text. Color can also be used in charts, graphs, illustrations, or photos.
- **Consider flow.** People read left to right, so set up your poster that way. For example, the abstract should go on the left, not in the center under the title with other sections wrapped around it. Remember it's sometimes hard to get back to the left side to read a second row, so you may want to go top to bottom and left to right. But it should be very clear how the poster flows. If you need to, you can use small arrows directing readers to the next panel.
- **Try it out.** Tape it to the wall or place it on the floor, then try reading it from 5 or 6 feet away. Check that everything is big enough and that the flow works.
- **Prepare a handout.** (There will be no audio-visual equipment available.) Include the abstract and perhaps an abbreviated methods, results, and discussion section. You might add any pertinent tables or graphs. Most importantly, put contact information and that this was for an AEJMC poster session with the year and the city. Make it easy for them to cite you, should they choose to do so.

The extra thought and effort will be worth it, and you'll feel better about your research during the poster session. You don't want to be in a position of one poster participant who said, "I must admit I was a little embarrassed that my poster looked so shabby compared to some."

Scholar-to-Scholar (Poster Session) Presentation Guidelines

Poster sessions are an important scholarly venue within AEJMC research competitions. They provide an opportunity to present research in a visually engaging format and to interact directly with conference attendees. The following guidelines are intended to help presenters communicate their work clearly, professionally, and effectively.

1. Poster Format & Size

- Presenters will be provided with a **freestanding poster board measuring approximately 8 feet wide × 4 feet high**.
- Posters may be:
 - A **single large, printed poster**, or
 - Multiple printed panels mounted directly on the board.
- **Pins will be provided**, but presenters are encouraged to bring extra fasteners as a precaution.
- Posters should be designed to fit **horizontally (landscape orientation)** unless otherwise specified by the conference.

2. Design & Readability

Your poster should be easily readable from a distance of **4–6 feet**.

Recommended font sizes

- Title: approximately **120–150 pt**
- Section headings: **42–48 pt**
- Body text: **minimum 24 pt** (28 pt preferred)
- Captions and references: no smaller than **18–20 pt**

Design best practices

- Use **high contrast** between text and background.
- Avoid dense blocks of text; use **bullet points and short phrases**.
- Use a clean, professional font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Helvetica).
- Ensure color choices are accessible and readable for all viewers.

3. Content Organization

Posters should follow a **clear, logical flow**, typically left-to-right and top-to-bottom. A common structure includes:

- Title and author information (with institutional affiliations)
- Research question or purpose
- Brief literature context or framework
- Methods
- Key findings or results
- Discussion and implications
- References (selective)
- Contact information

Visual cues (spacing, alignment, or subtle arrows) may be used to guide readers through the poster.

4. Use of Visuals

- Tables, charts, figures, and images are strongly encouraged.
- Visual elements should **support key findings**, not duplicate text.
- Graphics should be large enough to interpret easily without explanation.

5. Presenter Expectations

- At least one author should be **present at the poster during the scheduled session**.
- Presenters should be prepared to:
 - Provide a brief verbal overview (2–3 minutes)
 - Answer questions from attendees and judges (if applicable)

6. Handouts & Digital Enhancements

- Optional handouts may include:
 - The abstract
 - A brief summary of methods and findings
 - Key tables or figures
- Presenters are encouraged to include:
 - **QR codes** linking to the full paper, supplemental materials, or professional contact information.
- All materials should clearly indicate:
 - AEJMC Research Competition
 - Conference year and location

7. Final Preparation Tips

- Assemble and review your poster before traveling.
- Test readability by viewing it from several feet away.
- Confirm that all text, figures, and citations are accurate and complete.

Well-designed posters enhance the visibility of your research and invite meaningful scholarly exchange. Thoughtful preparation will help ensure a professional and engaging presentation experience.