



POSTER PREPARATION TIPS

Generally speaking, the poster is not a well-defined academic genre. For poster creators, this has the advantage of affording a great deal of flexibility, but it also leaves a lot of uncertainty about what is expected and what is the “right” or “best” way to showcase your work in poster form. Here are a few tips on poster generation for the ICOS poster session that have been gleaned from various sources and our own experience:

HOW DO I MAKE A POSTER? THE BASICS

ICOS will provide an easel that can hold a cardboard or foam-core board up to 48” x 48”. Poster boards are not provided, but it is strongly recommended that you display your presentation on a stiff background, such as corrugated cardboard or foam-core. These are available at art supply and craft stores such as OfficeMax or Michael’s. Many stores have “science fair” display boards that fold into 4 sections and work quite nicely.

Though it is possible to generate a very professional poster display using the [Poster Shop](#) at the Duderstadt Center on North Campus or through [MPrint](#) at the Shapiro Library or Angell Hall, this is neither necessary nor expected for the ICOS poster session.

One strategy that has worked well for many students in the past is printing out a series of PowerPoint slides and attaching these to the poster display board in a visually compelling arrangement. Printing these in color is well worth the hassle/cost in most cases.

WHAT SHOULD MY POSTER INCLUDE?

1. In creating a poster, it is important to be able to make key points without using a lot of text. Bullet points and illustrations can be very effective.
2. Many effective posters are divided into the same sections that a paper would be: Introduction and Problem Statement, Methods, Results, Conclusions, and Implications. Work that is at an earlier stage obviously will not be able to include all of these sections, and this is not a problem. Show whatever you’ve got.
3. Text smaller than 20 points or so is probably too small. Your poster should be legible from a few feet away without squinting.
4. Use visuals to draw attention to the most interesting parts of your poster. Some very nice examples of visually compelling posters can be found at: <http://www.acm.org/uist/posterexamplegallery.html>
5. Remember that ICOS draws an interdisciplinary crowd, so you may want to avoid jargon and define key terms that may be ambiguous.
6. As a general rule of thumb, you should be able to present the important parts of your poster to somebody in about 2-3 minutes. It can be good to have a little bit more information in case people ask questions, but not so much that you’ll overwhelm the casual observer.
7. It’s a good idea to include a few references/citations in your introduction to provide a general sense of where your work is theoretically situated. Try to pick the most important ones. Including your whole literature review is probably not a good idea.
8. If you’re still at an early stage in your work and want feedback on multiple ideas, that’s okay too. Be sure to provide enough information on each one, though, so that people will understand them quickly and you can get some useful feedback.



HOW DOES A POSTER SESSION WORK?

You should expect to stand near your poster and field questions from faculty and students who will be milling about and enjoying the tasty food that ICOS will provide. It's a good idea to have a 2-3 minute "spiel" ready to go that describes your work, why it's important and what the major findings are (or, for early stage work, what you hope to find). If there are particular aspects of your work that you want feedback on, this is the time to point those out.

Remember here too that ICOS draws an interdisciplinary crowd, so it may be wise to rehearse your presentation with friends who do work in another area. If your friends are sick of hearing about your research try offering to bake cookies, buy beer or provide other incentives as you see fit. They may be more willing to help.

You may also want to bring some supplies that'll help you keep track of all the feedback you get. Some post-it notes, 3x5 note cards and pens/highlighters have proven useful to students in the past for jotting things down or making annotations right on the poster.