

A Recipe for Creating Professional Posters Using Publisher

from: Nancy B. Clark, M.Ed. and Dennis Baker, PhD, FSU College of Medicine

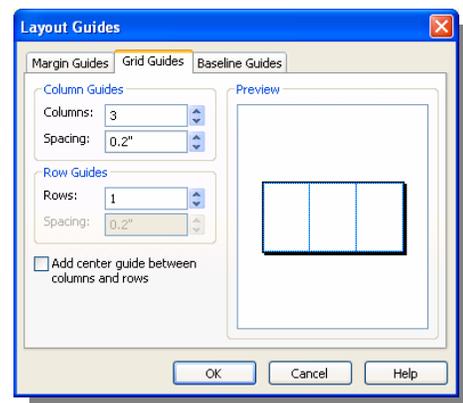
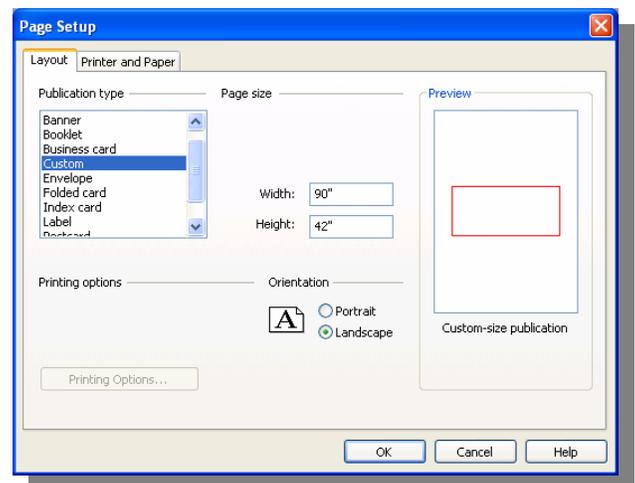
If you are trying to create large posters using PowerPoint, you are using the wrong software. This is what Publisher was designed to do. PowerPoint has a maximum page size of 56" (width or height). It is designed to produce screen images, not print images. Most professional posters need to be 42" by 72" or larger. Publisher is not expensive. It is now bundled with Microsoft Office Professional 2003-7. Learn to use it.

Ingredients

1. Microsoft Publisher
2. An image editor like PhotoShop
3. Content – a research paper, description of educational activity, etc.
4. Images at high resolution (200 dpi)
5. 1G of RAM and several Gigs of free hard drive space (resource intensive)
6. Color Plotter that will accommodate up to 42" wide roles of slick paper. (or a Kinkos close by)

Instructions

1. **Plan your poster** on paper using principles of good design, flow, etc. Best strategy is to develop a PowerPoint slide presentation with all your "words" (remember Rule of 6), images and such that sequences your subject and conveys exactly what you want to include in your poster presentation. You can then use this to help guide your poster development: copying and pasting much of it. However, first Save the PowerPoint as an Outline (rtf) file, and then copy and paste from Word, not the PowerPoint slides. Otherwise, problems with text boxes arise.
2. **Start Publisher.** Create a new blank print publication. Under the **File** menu, select **Page Setup**. Under **Publication Type**, pick **Custom**. Set **Orientation** to **Landscape** if applicable. Then put in the width and height. If you are going to be using the standard 4'x8' cork board display, I would use 72" by 42" to leave some border space for tacking up handouts.
3. **Set up margin and grid guides** to help you keep the poster symmetrical and proportional. **View the Master Page.** Under the **Arrange** menu you have two ways to put guides on your background.
 - Under **Layout Guides**, you can set up the poster with columns and rows.



- Using **Ruler Guides**, you can insert either vertical or horizontal guides; then move them where you want them.

Once these guides are set up, be sure to **Close Master Page View**.

4. **Start adding your content.** Like PowerPoint, Publisher's pages are completely unstructured. You use tools to add a **Text Box** . **Picture Frame** , **Table**  and **Word Art** . You can also add **lines, arrows, geometric shapes, AutoShapes** and other objects and format these using fill colors, patterns and gradients, line colors, styles and thickness. You move these boxes around, adjusting their width, height, and add shadows. See the Publisher Quick Reference card for some help here. Save often.

Zoom in and out a lot, keeping in mind both the content and flow, and the overall appearance of the poster. There is a lot of advice online as to fonts to use, numbers of colors, etc. Some of this advice is included at the end.

5. **Print the poster.** Unfortunately, in version 2003 of Publisher, you can not print directly to a plotter or large format printer. An intermittent step is necessary. Using **Save As**, under **Save as Type**, save the poster as either **.jpg**, **.tif** or if there are not photographs in the poster, **.gif**. Now you have an image file that can be taken to Kinko's, your university print office, or to the computer attached to the plotter. In this format, you can print it smaller to check out how the colors look and let others review it for content, typos, etc. Another handy proofing strategy is to let Publisher print out the poster on 8 ½ by 11 paper. It will print out as many pages as it takes, putting crop marks around edges so you can tape together the poster for proofing purposes.
6. **At the conference:** To attach the poster to the cork board, you may use either push pins or Velcro. If Velcro, the boards provided must be covered in some kind of fabric that will stick to Velcro. Take a box of push pins with you just in case. Do not attach the Velcro until you get to the conference. Carry poster in an appropriate size heavy cardboard or plastic document tube to protect it.
7. **Handouts:** Print out your poster image file on legal size paper (landscape) in color if you can afford it. This will be a good test of your font sizes as well. If you can still read it, you did well. Articles or papers also make good handouts if they can be printed on one page.



Tips for Posters from Around the Web:

Rules of Consistency

- Pick 2-3 fonts. Use the same Font for all... (size, color, capitalization, alignment)
 - Headings (i.e. 60 pt Goody Old Style, Bold, Shadowed, Garnet, Centered)
 - Body Text (i.e. 32 pt Verdana, Black, Left justified)
 - Labels (i.e. 20 pt Arial, black, centered)
- Pick two or three colors, use throughout poster
- Keep shading same (color and fade)
- Keep borders same (color, style and thickness)
- Keep objects (text boxes, headings) aligned to guidelines (vertically and horizontally)
- Keep margins and gutters consistent
- Keep line spacing consistent, adjust for readability

Standard format:

- The *title and contributors or authors* will appear across the top.
- Think BIG! 96-120 point. The title banner should be readable from at least 20 feet away.
- If space permits, use first names for contributors/authors to facilitate interactions.
- City names, or even states, often may be dropped from the institutional affiliations.
- There are no rules regarding line justification of the title. Determine if you will left or center justify the text of the title banner once it has been formatted, based upon personal preferences and space constraints

Use Color - Contrast colors

- Pick a color scheme for your poster that uses two or three contrasting colors. Get someone who is NOT color blind to make sure your colors do not clash.
- Backgrounds should be white or a gentle gradient to save ink. Shading can be used to define areas.
- Be conservative - overuse of color is distracting.
- Enhance the hues or contrast of photographs by putting them in color blocks that make them show up.

Title and Text

- The final size of letters in the title itself should be about 1.5 - 2 inches tall and in bold caps. Aim for 150 point size or use Word Art to custom fit to an area. You should be able to read the title from 20 feet away.
- The authors names may be printed smaller, at 72 points (1 - 1.5 inches)
- Affiliations can be even smaller, at about 48 points (0.5 - 0.75 inch)
- Double-space all text, using left-justification; text with even left sides and jagged right sides is easiest to read.
- Make sure the text is large enough to be read from *at least 6 feet* away.
- Section headings (Introduction, Methods, etc.); use Boldface, 48 point

- Supporting text (Intro text, figure captions, etc.); use 36-42 point (boldface, if appropriate)
- If you must include narrative details, keep them brief. They should be no smaller than 24 point in size, and printed in a plain text. Remember that posters are not publications of record, and you can always come to the session armed with handouts.
- Consider using a larger size (42 pt) for the Conclusion text, and a smaller size (32 pt) for Methods text.
- Other options for reader friendly fonts include Arial, Times Roman, Palatino, Century Schoolbook, Courier, and Prestige. Note that these fonts represent a range of letter spacing and letter heights.
- Finally, be consistent. Choose one font and then use it throughout the poster. Add emphasis by using boldface, underlining, or color; *italics are difficult to read.*

Edit Ruthlessly!

- There **ALWAYS** is too much text in a poster.
- Posters primarily are visual presentations; the text materials serve to support the graphic materials.
- Use bulleted lists where possible instead of paragraphs of endless words.
- Look critically at the layout. If there is about 20% text, 40% graphics and 40% empty space, you are doing well.
- When in doubt, rephrase that text or delete it. (Keep chanting this mantra: There always is too much text. Always too much text.)
- Use active voice when writing the text; “It can be demonstrated” becomes “The data demonstrate...”.
- Delete all redundant references and filler phrases, such as *see Figure ...*
- Remove all material extraneous to the focal point of the poster.
- Have you provided an explicit take-home message and summarized and concluded briefly and in user-friendly language?