

Guide for Poster Presenters: Creating and Presenting at CSM

Who This Is For

Clinicians and students who are preparing to present a scientific or clinical poster—especially for the first time. Whether you are in a research lab, residency, or clinical setting, this is a straightforward guide to help you get ready.

PART 1: CREATING YOUR POSTER

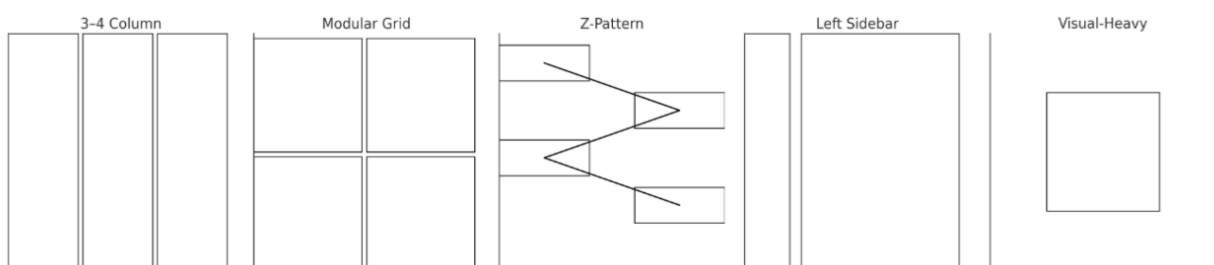
1. Start with Your Story

A poster is not a wall of data—it is a visual story of your project or idea. Before you open PowerPoint, Canva or your software of choice, take 5 minutes to outline:

- What is the one key message you want people to walk away with?
- What is the logical flow (Background → Purpose → Methods → Results → Conclusions)?
- What can be skipped or simplified without losing clarity? Remember less is more!
- You can even sketch a rough layout on paper

2. Use a Clean, Logical Layout

- Read the conference's poster guidelines before you start designing. Many conferences, including CSM, have specific requirements for poster dimensions, orientation, or mounting materials. Knowing these details ahead of time will help you avoid layout issues later.
- Most posters use 3–4 vertical columns (left-to-right reading), but other formats work too:
 - Modular grid – Break the poster into distinct boxes or panels. Good for mixed content like text + visuals.
 - Z-pattern or snake layout – Guides the reader's eye in a zigzag or S-shape. Works well for narrative or case-based posters.
 - Left sidebar – Use a narrow left column for introduction/objectives with results and visuals filling the main space.
 - Visual-heavy layout – Prioritizes images, charts, and infographics with minimal text. Best when visual clarity is more important than detail.



- Choose the format that best fits your content, but make sure the flow is obvious and not overwhelming.
- Keep plenty of whitespace. A clean design reads as confident and professional.
- Start with a title strip that includes your name(s), credentials, institution. Add any logos to the side
- Use clearly labeled sections: Background, Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusion, Clinical Relevance.
- Consider a small section (typically towards the bottom) for Acknowledgements and References.
*This is a must if you received any funding to support the project or travel to the conference!

3. Design Tips

- Title: at least 72 pt
- Section headers: 36–48 pt
- Body text: 24–32 pt (never smaller than 18 pt)
- Use high contrast (e.g., dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background). Stick to 2–3 colors total.
- Use sans-serif fonts like Arial, Calibri. Avoid more than two fonts.
- Prioritize clarity over complexity in visuals.
- Do not paste Excel tables—convert to clean visuals.
- Decide between printing on paper vs. cloth/canvas

*Test for readability – Set your poster zoom to 100% on your screen, then step back about 3 feet. If you can still read the text and interpret figures, your audience likely will too.

4. Software Tools

- PowerPoint is standard and widely accepted. Google slides should work too.
- Canva offers free templates with drag-and-drop tools.
- BioRender is useful for scientific diagrams.
- Check with your institution for templates or printing support.

PART 2: PRESENTING YOUR POSTER

1. Know the Format

- Set up your poster at the assigned time and location.
- Stand at your poster during the full session time.
- Engage with attendees and answer questions.

2. How to Present

Think of your poster like a conversation starter, not a script.

A. 1-minute summary:

- Who you are
- What you studied
- Why it matters
- Key finding or takeaway

B. 3–5-minute walkthrough:

- Background, Methods, Results, Conclusion

C. Questions:

- Be ready to clarify methods, unusual results, or relevance.

3. Tips for Engagement

- Rehearse with a colleague or record yourself.
- Make eye contact, smile, and greet attendees.
- Do not read your poster—talk about it.
- Point to figures or tables as you explain them
- Prepare 2–3 questions or talking points to ask attendees.
- Bring 8.5×11" copies of your poster, business cards, or a QR code linking to your poster or contact info to make follow-up easy.
- Consider taking notes on questions that you are asked or comments you receive

Optional Additional Resources

- Designing Effective Scientific Posters (UNC): <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/posters>

[The Basics - Academic Poster Resources - Yale University Library Research Guides at Yale University-](#)

- UW–Madison DesignLab Poster Guide: <https://designlab.wisc.edu/resources/projects/posters/>

- “Better Poster” as a design: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYk29tnxASs>