

Constructing a Poster Presentation

In preparation of our Earth Day 2010 celebration we are inviting you to create a Poster Presentation that addresses the question:

“What Happens When the Oil Runs Out?”

What exactly is a Poster Presentation?

A poster presentation is a *visual* communication tool. A poster advertises your project. It combines text and graphics to present your project in a way that is visually interesting and accessible.

An effective poster will help you...



...display your work to a large group and to talk to and receive feedback from interested persons.

Posters serve as...

- A source of information
- A conversation starter
- A summary of your work

A successful poster is not created overnight. Preparing a well-organized, visually-pleasing poster requires you to plan well in advance. First, consider your audience and what type of poster you'll create. Next, gather your supplies and decide what information to include. A poster should clearly state *what* you did, *how* you did it, *why* you did it and *what* it contributes to the guiding question:

“What happens when the oil runs out?”

What goals should I keep in mind as I construct my poster?

- Keep it simple. Decide on one or two key points that you want your viewers to take away from your presentation.
- Make it visually interesting. You want viewers to notice and take interest in your poster so that they will pause to learn more about your project, and you will need the poster's design to present your research in a way that is easy for those viewers to make sense of it.

What will the people viewing my poster be expecting from it?

- The Future of Flight is open to the general public. This audience may have a basic understanding of the impact of oil consumption and its effect on everyday life, but they won't be experts. This audience will be interested in the *what* and *why* of your project- the broader motivations for the project and its impact on their own lives. This audience gives you an opportunity to teach them about the interesting information you've been learning and to convince them that the kind of work your doing can –eventually change the world!

How much information can I include on my poster?

- Probably less than you would like! One of the biggest pitfalls of poster presentations is filling your poster with so much text that it overwhelms your viewers and makes it difficult for them to tell which points are the most important. Viewers should be able to skim the poster from several

feet away and easily make out the most significant points. The point of a poster is not to list every detail of your project. Rather, it should explain the value of your project. To do this effectively, you will need to determine your “take-home message”. What is the single most important thing you want your audience to understand, believe, accept, or do after they see your poster?

Once you have an idea about what your “take-home message” is, support it by adding some details about *what* you did as part of your research, *how* you did it, *why* you did it and *what* it contributes to the guiding question.

*What kind of information should I include about **what** I did?*

- This is the raw material of your research: a clear statement of your project’s main argument (what you are trying to prove) and the evidence that supports that argument. In the hard sciences, the what of a project is often divided into its *hypothesis* and its *data* or *results*. In other areas of study, the what is made up of a *claim* or *thesis statement* and the *evidence* used to back it up.
- Remember, your viewers won’t be able to process too much detailed evidence; it’s your job to narrow down this evidence so that you’re providing the big picture. Choose a few key pieces of evidence that most clearly illustrate your “take-home message”. Often a chart, graph, table, photo or other figure can help you clarify this information and communicate it quickly and easily.

*What kind of information should I include about **how** I did it?*

- Include information about the process you followed as you conducted the project. Viewers will not have time to wade through too many technical details, so only your general approach is needed.

*What kind of information should I include about **why** I did it?*

- Give your audience information about your motivation for this project. What real-world problems or questions prompted you to undertake this project? What information is essential for your audience to be able to understand your project and its significance?

*What kind of information should I include about its **contribution**?*

- Help your audience to see what your project means for you and them. How do you see this project potentially changing lives? Include what you have learned in completing this project.

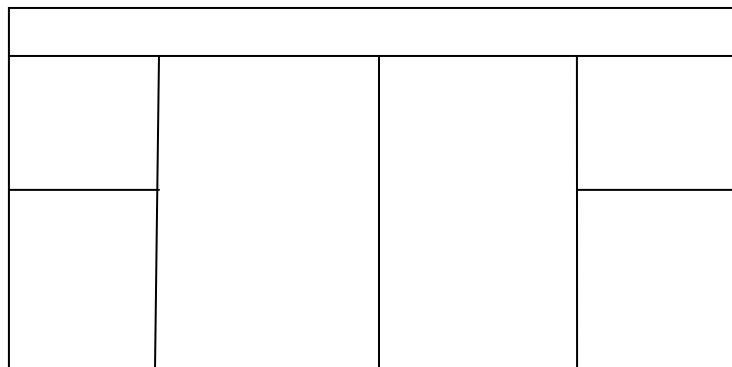
Once I have decided what to include, how do I actually design my poster?

The effectiveness of your poster depends on how quickly and easily your audience can read and interpret it, so it's best to make your poster visually strong. You only have a few seconds to grab attention as people wander past your poster; make the most of those seconds!

How do lay out my poster?

In general, people expect information to flow left-to-right and top-to-bottom.

Arrange the contents in a series of columns. This will facilitate the flow of traffic past the poster.



The title will appear across the top.

A brief introduction (3-5 sentences) will appear in at the upper left.

The conclusions will appear at the lower right.

Methods and results will fill the remaining space.

How much space should I devote to each section?

- This depends on the specifics of your project. In general, remember how much space you devote to each idea suggests how important that section is. Make sure that you allot the most space to your most important points.

Should I use graphics?

- Yes! Visual aids are one of the most effective ways to make your poster visually strong and they are often a great way to communicate complex information easily. Use pictures, graphs and other items that will interest your viewers, communicate your motivation, demonstrates why your project is particularly interesting or unique. Don't use visual aids just for the sake of having a pretty picture on your poster. The visual aids should contribute to your overall message and should give your viewers some piece of information that they couldn't get just from reading your poster's text.

How can I make sure that my poster is easy to read?

- Use large font. Don't make the text smaller in order to fit more onto the poster. Make sure that 95% of the text on your poster can be read from 4 feet away. If viewers can't make out the text from a distance, they're likely to walk away.
- Choose a font that is easy to read. Be consistent and use the same font through the whole poster.
- Use 1.5 or double-spacing to make text easier to read.

- Use bold, italicized or colored fonts for the **main points** only. Too much emphasized text makes it harder not easier to locate important points.
- Avoid using all capital letters which can be hard to read.
- Make your main points easy to find by setting them off with bullets or numbers.

What exactly is the “presentation” part of a poster presentation?

When you are standing in front of your poster, you and what you choose to say are as important as the actual poster. Be ready to talk about your project, answer viewers’ questions, provide additional details about your project, and so on.

How should I prepare for my presentation?

Once your poster is finished, you should re-familiarize yourself with the larger project. Remind yourself about those details you ended up having to leave out of the poster, so that you will be able to bring them up in discussion with viewers. Then, practice, practice, practice.

Show your poster to friends, classmates and teachers before the Earth day celebration. Prepare a three to four minute overview of the project, where you walk the viewers through the poster, drawing their attention to the most important points. Pay attention to the questions that your friends and teachers ask, because these are most likely the same questions that visitors to the Future of Flight will ask. Prepare answers to these questions. You may even consider preparing a handout that provides additional information or answers predictable questions.

On the day of the celebration, how long should I let viewers look at the poster before I start talking to them?

Don’t feel like you have to start talking to viewers the minute they stop in front of your poster. Give them a few minutes to read and process the information. Then, say something like, “Hello, thanks for stopping to look at my poster”. This kind of greeting works better than simply saying “Do you have any questions?” because

after only a few moments, viewers might not have had time to come up with questions, even if they are interested in hearing more about your project.

Should I read from my poster?

No! Make sure you are familiar enough with your poster that you can talk about it without looking at it. Use the poster as a visual aid, pointing to it when you need to draw viewers' attention to a chart, photograph, or particularly interesting point.