

# A guide to designing conference posters

Compiled by Robin Hayward (they/them)

Email: [RobinMHayward@gmail.com](mailto:RobinMHayward@gmail.com)

Note: This poster contains several meta features, including explanations of how to optimise specific poster elements, presented via the element itself. This plain-text version has therefore been adapted from the original text via the addition of headings and parentheses to improve contextual understanding. All retained images have been provided with alt-text descriptions, accessible via screen readers.

**Title:** 2 or 3 words (The title should be sufficiently large that two or three words span the page. This font is bold and has a slight shadow for contrast and 3D effect)

**Subtitle:** Short but more specific subtitle (the subtitle is in the same style as the title but smaller, again filling a single line)

**Authors:** Your Name (email address and social media), a bunch of other people's names come after that...

**Context:** The context for your research goes here. This isn't just raw facts; it's your emotive hook. Bring in the hard hitting stuff straight away. Make them care. What is the problem you are trying to solve? Why are you trying to solve it?

The text on your poster should be large enough to read at arm's length when it is printed on A4 paper. This assumes the reader has good eyesight or is wearing corrective lenses. People for whom this is not true may struggle to access a physically presented poster. Instead, a good way to improve accessibility is to link to a digital plain-text version of the poster (QR code at the bottom of this poster), where people can adjust the font size or use screen-reading software. Accessibility is improved by using sans serif fonts on plain backgrounds. High contrast colours are a must but black on white can be difficult for those with dyslexia so off-white is preferred. Left aligned text is easier to read than justified or centred text.

Figure 1.

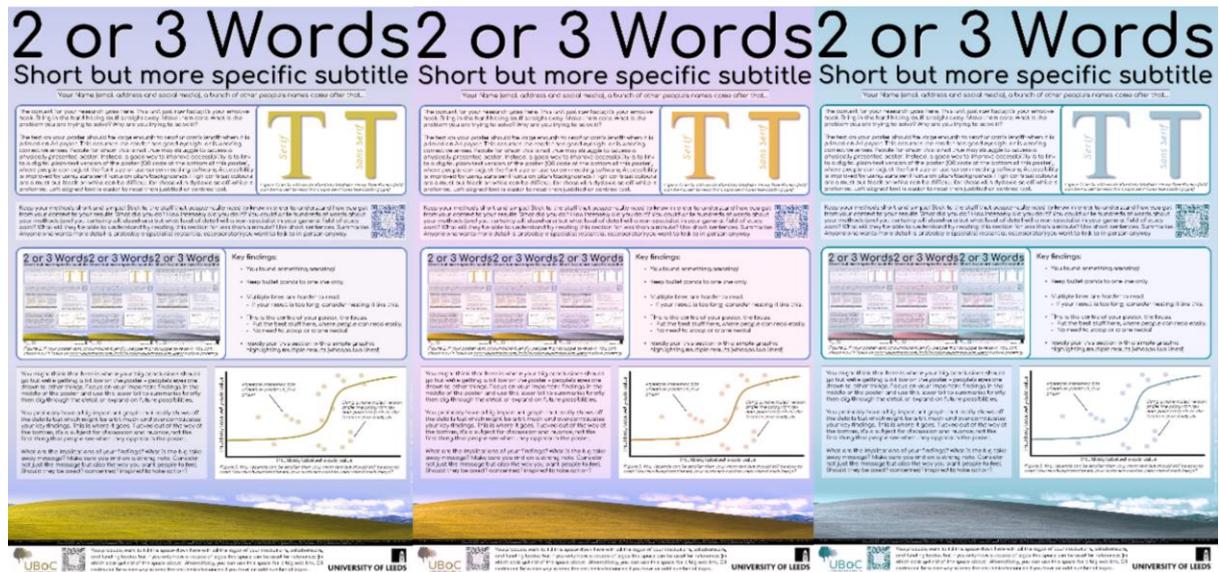


Fonts with serifs (the flicky bits) like Times New Roman (left) can be harder to read than sans serif fonts like Calibri (right)

**Methods:** Keep your methods short and simple! Stick to the stuff that people really need to know in order to understand how you got from your context to your results. What did you do? How intensely did you do it? You could write hundreds of words about your methods (and you certainly will elsewhere) but what level of detail will a non-specialist in your general field of study want? What will they be able to understand by reading this section for less than a minute? Use short sentences. Summarise. Anyone who wants more detail is probably a specialist (potential collaborator) you want to talk to in person anyway.

**QR code 1:** QR codes can take you to more detailed methods with images or even videos! This code leads to the song 'Never Gonna Give You Up' by Rick Astley on YouTube (it is not labelled this way on the original poster): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ>

Figure 2.



If your poster isn't colour-blind friendly, people may struggle to read it. You can check how it looks at [color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator](http://color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator) before printing!

Key findings:

- You found something amazing!
- Keep bullet points to one line only.
- Multiple lines are harder to read.
  - If your result is too long, consider nesting it like this.
- This is the centre of your poster, the focus.
  - Put the best stuff here, where people can read easily.
  - No need to stoop or crane necks!
- Ideally pair this section with a simple graphic highlighting multiple results (whoops two lines!)

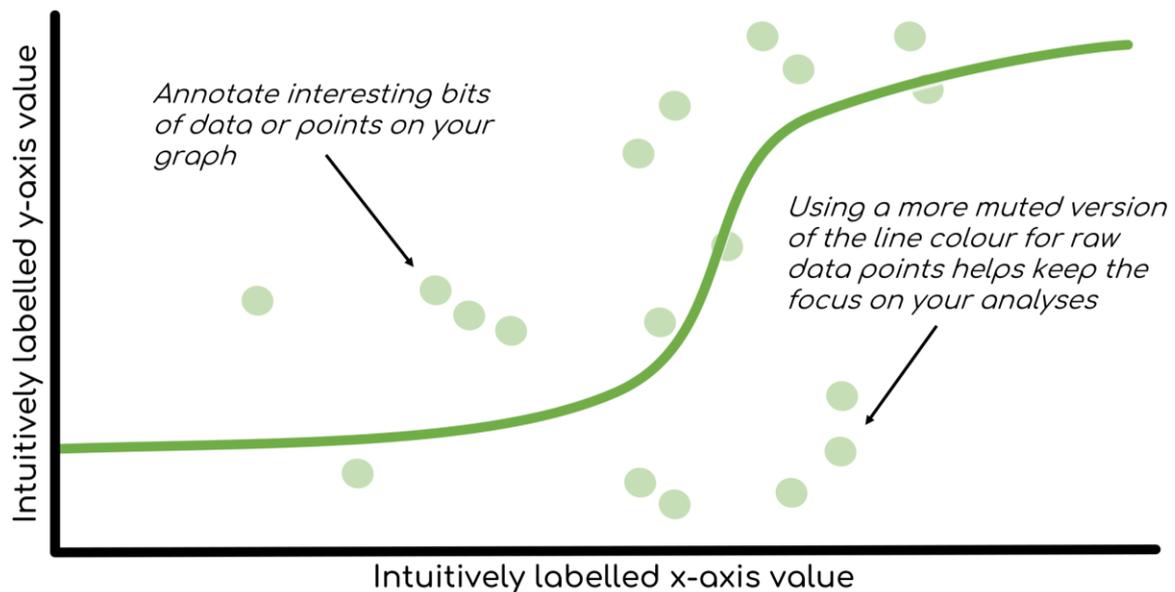
Discussion:

You might think that here is where your big conclusions should go but we're getting a bit low on the poster – people's eyes are drawn to other things. Focus on your important findings in the middle of the poster and use this lower bit to summarise briefly then dig through the detail or expand on future possibilities.

You probably have a big important graph that really shows off the details but which might be a bit much and overcomplicates your key findings. This is where it goes. Tucked out of the way at the bottom, it's a subject for discussion and nuance, not the first thing that people see when they approach the poster.

What are the implications of your findings? What is the big take away message? Make sure you end on a strong note. Consider not just the message but also the way you want people to feel. Should they be awed? concerned? inspired to take action?

Figure 3.



Your legends can be smaller than your main text but should still be easy to read. How much explanation will your audience need to understand each image?

### Footer:

The footer contains an image of rolling hills (sourced from a Windows XP desktop background) that blends into the overall poster colour scheme and background

### Citations:

[1] Pro-tip (2022) You can make your references really small. These don't have to be a focus for your poster. If they would be legible on A4, they'll be fine here. People who really want to know can lean in. [2] Parentheses are over-rated (2022) For your in-text citations consider using super-scripts like they do on Wikipedia! [3] Short References (2022) Even here you can keep things brief. Stick to 1<sup>st</sup> Author et al, year of publication, and title. Throw in a journal name if you like but other details usually aren't necessary and take up space. [4] How many (2022) Surely you don't actually need 20 citations for a poster. Cite what you have to and don't plagiarise but consider if how many

citations you're using reflects an overly wordy and information dense poster that some might find hard to access...

### Logo footer:

You probably want to fill this space down here with all the logos of your institutions, collaborators, and funding bodies but if you only have a couple of logos this space can be used for references (in which case get rid of the space above). Alternatively, you can use this space for a big web link. QR codes can be a nice way to keep the aesthetics balanced if you have an odd number of logos...

### QR code 2:

QR codes can take you to more info or accessible versions of the poster. This QR code links to the accessible PDF you have just read.