**Introduction**, size 68

Before designing your poster, consider your goal. Are you providing information, raising awareness of an issue, changing an opinion, or something else? What is the desired effect of your message? Use your goal to guide your decisions about what is the most important information and how to display it.

Your message’s effect is influenced by your audience, the environment in which it is delivered, and its design features. For example, are you presenting to experts or a mixed audience? You will need to tailor your content to suit your particular audience’s values and needs. Also consider the environment: Will your poster be one in ten or one in fifty? How much do you need to stand out? Will you stand by your poster to explain it in person, or will it stand alone?

**Design Principles**

**Contrast**, size 36

Use contrast in style to communicate an organized hierarchy of information and to guide your viewer’s eye.

- Consider using a contrasting font for your header.
- You can also use size, italics, bolding, and color coding to increase contrast between pieces of text.
- Avoid black type on darkly-colored backgrounds, or white type on light-colored backgrounds.

**Repetition**

Repeat visual elements such as color, shapes, textures, borders, and fonts to unify the poster.

- Make sure all headers are the same font size.
- Make sure spacing between elements is consistent.

**Alignment**

Check for horizontal and vertical alignment.

By zooming in 100% or more, you can more easily check margins as well as inter-marginal space. White padding around text makes it easier to read.

**Proximity**

Placing elements close together creates a relationship between them. Try to create visual units using close proximity. For example, the image above goes with ‘Alignment’ not ‘Proximity’ because it is slightly closer to the alignment text.

**Layout**

There are many different options for poster layout. Select one that allows the most important information to stand out.

Avoid the temptation to cram so much content into a space that the text has to be shrunk, or that you lose the opportunity for your viewer’s eyes to relax with some negative/blank space. Consider using bullet points instead of paragraphs, or diagrams instead of wordy explanations.

**Resources**

- Adobe InDesign
  - If you have time, learn it. InDesign is the best for layout, text, and image handling.

- Adobe Illustrator
  - A good alternative to InDesign. Illustrator has great alignment tools and working with layers makes designing posters much easier.

- PowerPoint / Google Slides / Keynote
  - You can do a lot with slideshow programs! But, some have limited alignment tools.

- Use images 300dpi or larger. If using another person’s image, make sure to cite the source.

- To proportionately scale an image, press and hold shift while dragging a corner.

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- Layout ideas: