

## Giving a Scientific Poster – Handy Hints and Tips by Lisa Baddeley

General advice on the format of the poster is all contained on the website link –

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/remedi/poster/index.html>

- Posters
  - Great for getting detailed feedback about your work
  - A chance to discuss (as opposed to present) your work
  - A chance to meet people in your research field.
  - Good preparation is the key

### 1. Know your audience

- a. Is it
  - i. a specialized meeting within your research field?
  - ii. a general large meeting (AGU/EGU)?
  - iii. a PhD school / workshop?

Generally, the more specialized means less background is needed on your poster (e.g no need to explain how your radar works if the meeting is for scientists who work with that radar system). The larger the meeting the more 'formal' the poster room is.

- b. Look through the participants list before you go to the meeting – identify anyone you want to specifically talk to and either
  - i. send a polite email beforehand
  - ii. or grab them at the 'ice breaker session at the start of a meeting

and either asking them to drop by the poster (limited time when the posters are on display) or arrange a coffee break time you can meet at your poster (outside of the main poster session time).

- c. People who come to your poster will generally already be in your research field so you don't have to start at first principles. (e.g. People who are already working on solar flares are going to be the ones coming to your 'solar flare' poster)

### 2. Know your venue

- a. Is it a large hall with specific poster spaces (e.g. EGU/AGU) or are you going to be on a poster board in the coffee room. (NB – pay attention to poster board size and orientation..don't turn up with a portrait poster to go on a landscape poster board)

- b. All meetings will have a specific poster session time where you are expected to be at your poster (generally including drinks and food to entice people).
  - c. Check when and where your poster will be able to be displayed (this also relates to when/if you can chat to people outside of your assigned poster session). Generally:
    - i. One day or afternoon at a big meeting (AGU/EGU)
    - ii. All week at smaller meetings
3. Supporting equipment
- a. Have a laptop with you with any additional graphs / movies / animations etc. Some venues (EGU) have a specific table set aside next to your poster board for your laptop.
    - i. Don't have to overload your poster with all your results (you can just have the main ones)
    - ii. Nothing gets peoples attention like a quick movie of fieldwork (and then they always hang around to politely look at your poster)
  - b. Have copies of your posters as A4 handouts
    - i. Attached them in a see-through envelope to the poster board – people can help themselves when you aren't there
    - ii. Always save some to hand out during the poster session
    - iii. Make about 20 copies (depends on your research field / meeting size)
  - c. Have a copy of your contact details / business cards (if you don't have/incase you run out of handouts)
  - d. (Even have a 1 page CV if you are looking for a postdoc position. You'll have to apply through normal channels etc. but whomever is hiring you will remember you from the meeting and have info on you to hand)
  - e. (If the work is already published) Have a notepad and pen (or make a sign up sheet) to note down email addresses of people who want a copy of it.
4. Don't overload the poster with text
- a. Most people will read the abstract, the conclusions and look at the graphs
  - b. Keep the text to bullet points
  - c. Have a well organized flow with numbered sections (generally):
    - i. Abstract, Instrumentation, Method, Results, Conclusions
5. Preparation:
- a. Give a run through of your poster to your supervisor (if possible) / colleagues. You should be able to summarize it in 2-5 minutes.

- b. Print out a version of your poster beforehand (if you can) or see if you can use a projector to look at it in one of the meeting rooms (Van Keulen, Van Mijen).
- c. Have something small to eat beforehand (banana, muffin – something to give you some energy as you are going to be standing there answering questions for 2-3 hours potentially)
- d. Have a small bottle of water with you (talking for 2 -3 hours continuously).
- e. Have a note pad and pen at the ready to scribble down suggestions from people.
- f. If you have specific items you want to discuss with people then put it into more concrete terms beforehand
  - i. 'what do you think about this graph?' vs.
  - ii. 'My results indicate a correlation between X and Y. I think that Y is influenced by Z but I am not an expert in that area – do you know of any work / have any suggestions regarding Z?'

6. The main event

- a. Relax and enjoy it. This is your research and a chance for you to chat about your results with the rest of the scientific community
- b. Make an effort with your clothes – smart casual always works well
- c. Give people a chance to read the poster first.
- d. I generally start with 'Hi – let me know if you have any questions or if you'd like me to summarize my results'. Some people will take you up on it, some not.
- e. Keep an eye out for the people you asked to come and look at your poster.
- f. Don't be disheartened if you don't get too many people visiting. (I generally talk to anywhere between 5 – 10 people in a 2 hour session)

7. Poster Printing Options:

<b>Option</b>	<b>Pro</b>	<b>Con</b>
Print your poster off A0 beforehand and carry it with you in a poster tube.	Cheapest and easiest option	Have to carry a poster tube around with you
Print it out at the venue (Note: AGU can print the posters out onto a cotton sheet so you can fold it up and put it in your suitcase)	don't have to carry a poster tube with you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not always possible</li> <li>• more expensive</li> <li>• you have to carry a poster tube (if you want to bring it back)</li> </ul>
Print it out in sections beforehand and carry it with you	cheap and you can put it into your luggage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• might not look as nice as a single sheet of paper</li> <li>• takes a lot longer to put up/take down.</li> </ul>