

Creating Posters Using MS PowerPoint

Things to be aware of *before* you begin

- **Maximum Poster Dimensions** (using PowerPoint): 36" x 54"
- **VERY, VERY IMPORTANT:** You **MUST** leave **ONE (1) INCH** of "white space" around the outside of your layout. Using "GUIDES" in PowerPoint is the easiest way to do this. Go to VIEW -> GUIDES and dotted lines appear on your page layout. For additional guides, hold down CTRL and drag on an existing guide. (This is also an easy way to line things up.)
- **Complete the entire poster on a single platform.** Switching from PC to Mac and Mac to PC can be a recipe for disaster. Please avoid this if at all possible.
- **Graphics and photos should be scanned at the size you want to use them on your poster** (not necessarily "actual" size). Scanning resolution should be at least 300 dpi. If you think you might need to enlarge an image a little once it is in PowerPoint, you may want to scan it at 200% at 300 dpi. Save files as medium or high quality JPG or TIF files.
- **Try to remain flexible.** Color output on the printer cannot be calibrated to any specific monitor, so the final printed poster color may look somewhat different than what you see on your screen.
- **DO NOT use semitransparent fills!** They look nice on-screen, but often print very unpredictably, if at all.

As you lay out your poster...

- Use a **non-serif font** (e.g., Helvetica, Arial) for title and headings and a **serif font** (e.g., Palatino, Times New Roman) for body text (serif-style fonts are much easier to read at smaller font sizes).

Starting points for text size:

Title (80 pt)

Heading (34 pt)

Subhead (28 pt)

Body Text (22 pt)

- **Highlight by making titles and/or subtitles a different color.** For instance, a white background with black text and **red**, **green** OR **blue** (but not all three) subtitles looks good. If you have color photos or graphics, think about picking out a dominant color from those as your highlight color.
- **Stick to “common” fonts.** If you have to use a non-standard font (e.g. ArcView fonts or symbols) make a copy of the font file and bring it along with your poster file when you are ready to print. Otherwise, fonts end up being replaced by other fonts, which might dramatically change the look and legibility of the poster.
- **Keep your audience in mind.** Make sure that details on graphs and photographs can be *comfortably* viewed from 6 feet away. Too much tiny text is going to deter readers. A common mistake is to assume that figure axis numbers, labels, figure legends are somehow exempt from font-size guidelines. On the contrary, most viewers will read *only* your figures!
- **Pictures and graphics that you find on the www *BELONG* there!** They might look fine in PowerPoint, but when www graphics are printed, they look horrible. If you cannot find a good quality digital image, please do not use an image at all. If you need to borrow a digital camera, please do so. If you are looking for logos (such as the UNCW house logo or a logo from another school) take the time to find “clean,” vector-based versions of them. All UNCW logos can be found at: www.uncw.edu/ba/printing_services/logos.htm, and you may email me (smithmd) for CMS logos if you need them.
- **If you include a photograph, add a thin gray or black border** to make it more visually appealing. Just remember not to overpower the image with an overly thick line. Choose a line color that is subtly pleasing but barely noticeable to the viewer.
- **Do not enlarge the images a great deal once they are inserted into PowerPoint.** If the image will be used larger in the poster than the original, it should be enlarged when scanning to the size it will be used in the poster. Scan the original at a higher magnification or resolution to make up for the size difference. If you need help with scanning, **ask me!**
- **PowerPoint does not allow “wrapping” of text** around inserted figures, so if you want this option for a particular section, you need to construct the section as a separate Microsoft Word file (which *does* allow text to wrap), and then insert this Word file into your PowerPoint poster by the menu command, **Insert -> Object** (select the “create from file” option). When you need to change anything, just double-click the section and the Microsoft Word file will be called up, magically, for you to edit.
- **Keep your file size manageable!** PowerPoint files need not be gigantic. If they are too big, the plotter will spit them out and refuse to print them. If you have a file larger than a few MBs, try cutting photographic images out (EDIT -> CUT) and pasting them back in as JPGs (EDIT -> PASTE SPECIAL -> Picture (JPEG file)). This will decrease file size *and* your chance for printing problems. You can also use the “Compress Pictures” function to optimize your file.

When you’re ready to print

To print your poster at CMS, give me (Melissa Smith, CMS Graphics/Scientific Illustration) a call (962.2316) or email (smithmd@uncw.edu) regarding when you will have your file ready for printing and when you are going to need the actual printed poster in your hand. Please keep in mind that I often have several posters that are being prepared for the same meeting; it is important to let me know ahead of time that you are putting one together, so that I can schedule my time accordingly. **Start early (!)**, and remember to bring me prizes if I have to save your skin at the last minute. ☺