



Tips and guidance on preparing an academic &/or conference poster Quick guide

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Academic posters are a highly effective means of sharing knowledge, promoting some aspect of your work or triggering debate about specific issues.

Overall, your poster needs to be clear, concise and easy to read.

Be clear about the purpose of your poster- A poster should convey a clear message about its overall purpose

Tailor your poster to the audience - Knowing your audience will help to ensure that your poster will be readily understood. Avoid using acronyms and use clear and inclusive terminology.

Think carefully about what content to include - Given space limitations, you'll need to be selective. Use of tables, charts and graphs can be effective and clearer if they are simple – two-dimensional ones. Use high resolution images (at least 300 pixels/square inch). Every graphic and figure should be labelled with a short legend. It is also good practice to include references and relevant web links. A QR code and/or URL plus the contact details of the poster author(s) are useful for signposting to further information.

Think carefully about the design and layout of your poster – Choose a blank template and populate each section with concise chunks of text. Think- do you need a landscape or portrait layout?

Poster lay-out- some tips....

- The layout should be logical, easy to follow and visually pleasing, clearly sequenced, using concise headings and sub-headings.
- Use text that is left justified with adequate line spacing.
- Ensure that paragraphs are not too long.
- Use of bullets can help to break up text but should not be overused.
- Well balanced arrangement of text and images/graphics.
- Try to ensure that your poster is not cluttered- 'Less is more'.
- The main text should be less than 600 words.
- Try to avoid using font sizes less than 24 and avoid complex or decorative fonts. Sans serif fonts, such as Arial and Calibri, are easier to read.
- Think carefully about style – no more than two fonts is advisable.
- Use capitals, italics and underlining sparingly.
- Ensure that your use of colour does not detract from the text. Using too many colours or colours that clash can be visually distracting.

Inclusivity and accessibility

- Know your audience, their background and consider where your conference is held in the world, to ensure accessibility / inclusivity.
- Ensure good colour contrast between font colour and background as this makes a difference in how easy something is to read.
- Avoid printing on glossy or reflective paper because it will produce glare.

- Choose a legible font, avoiding ones that are unusual or particularly decorative as these are harder to decipher. See above form note on Sans serif fonts, such as Arial and Calibri.
- Avoid using italics and ALL-CAPS, except sparingly, as it can make text harder to read.
- Avoid using too much text and avoid information overload. Keep it simple.
- For posters and display boards, a larger font should be used.
- Use text colour that has a strong contrast with the background colour.
- Ensure representation across diverse groups (e.g. ethnicity / race, age, gender) in your use of imagery.
- Consider your use of inclusive language.

Checking & printing – • proof-read carefully, seek feedback, save your poster as a pdf and then print– usually size A0 or A1, stand back from it (at least 2 metres) to see what it looks like and assess its overall clarity and readability.

FINALLY, THINK.....

- Purpose: is the purpose of the poster clear?
- Quality & clarity of the information included on the poster: is the message clear?
- Design of the poster: does it demonstrate good practice?
- Inclusivity: is the poster designed to ensure an inclusive & accessible approach?
- Overall visual appeal & impact: does it attract the viewer’s attention?
- Relevance of the message to clinical practice, research or education.

EXAMPLE POSTER

Facilitating an empathetic approach to parenting: An innovative practice experience for children’s nursing & social work students using infant simulation dolls
 Dr. Julia Petty; Dr. Lisa Whiting; Sheila Roberts; Professor Brian Littlechild; Dr. Karen Mills; School of Health and Social Work, University of Hertfordshire, UK

BACKGROUND

- In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, in 2021, advised nurse education providers that they could provide students with simulated practice experiences.
- As a response to the restrictions preventing face-to-face classroom contact, an innovative approach to simulation experience was developed using RealCare dolls. These are infant simulators designed to teach health related matters, previously used within dementia care (Mitchell, 2014) and with young people (Herрман et al., 2011). However, limited empirical evidence supports their use (Brinkman et al., 2016) for educational benefit.
- This opened an opportunity to explore their value with children’s nursing (CN) and social work (SW) students in providing simulated practice in relation to gaining an empathetic insight into parental experiences (Whiting et al., 2021).

AIM & OBJECTIVES

- **Aims** To evaluate the use of RealCare doll for simulated practice experience in relation to the development of an empathetic insight into parenting amongst CN and SW students.
- **Objectives**
 - To gain insight into an innovative approach to simulation practice in children’s nursing and social work education using infant simulators.
 - To understand how RealCare simulation infant dolls can be used and explored in a learning and teaching capacity, an area currently unexplored.
 - To consider how such an approach may enable CN and SW students to empathise with parents in their practice.

METHODS

- One cohort of first year CN students (n=50) were provided with a RealCare doll to care for; they were subsequently invited to participate in an interview to ascertain their perception of the doll and its ability for them to develop an empathetic insight into parenting. Interview data collection for the CN students was undertaken between July–September 2021 with 9 participants. SW students were given the doll in February / March 2022 and will be invited for interview in Spring 2022. Emerging themes are being collated for the 2 groups. In addition, students are required to reflect on their learning and its application to practice in readiness for their next placement.

Group	Year	Age	Sex	Height	Weight	Temperature	Pulse	Respiration	Blood Pressure
1	1	12	M	100	10	37.5	100	20	100/60
2	1	12	F	100	10	37.5	100	20	100/60
3	1	12	M	100	10	37.5	100	20	100/60
4	1	12	F	100	10	37.5	100	20	100/60
5	1	12	M	100	10	37.5	100	20	100/60

FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Common emerging themes for the CN students are as follows:
 - The need for preparation / support in the use of the RealCare doll; challenges in recognising the dolls’ / baby’s needs; the emotional & physical impact of caring for the doll; developing empathy for parents’ and the value of reflective learning.
 - Themes for the SW students are still being collated and analysed and will add to / further enhance the above findings.
 - The findings aim to inform the future teaching and learning of students using a creative simulation approach in relation to the development of empathy, a core skill for nursing and SW professionals. In turn, we aim to explore the use of RealCare dolls in other groups including, potentially, parents.

REFERENCES

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EMERGING THEMES

- Emotional & physical impact
- Empathy with parents
- Recognising the baby’s needs
- Preparation & support in doll use
- Reflective learning

“I feel like I’ve got a lot out of it because now when I’m back on the ward although I do empathise with people, I can really feel like it’s fresh again”

“It was quite tiring and...sometimes it was I suppose a bit overwhelming... But putting [it] in relation to a hospital setting it must be really, really, hard for parents caring for a child that’s really distressed. It must be exhausting”

Useful resources

- Gov.uk- [Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility](#)
- The Sensory Trust- [Designing inclusive posters](#)
- [Best practices when designing infographics for diversity and inclusion](#)
- [Creating a poster for a conference – top tips](#)

For further advice on designing your poster or if you would like templates or examples, contact Dr Julia Petty, UK NNA, University of Hertfordshire

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Good luck with your poster design & presentation.