

Guidelines for Creating Accessible Printed Posters

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Creating accessible posters provides all session participants with greater access to poster information. Designing posters to provide greater access minimizes the exclusion of participants from the benefits of poster sessions.

Following are guidelines for creating the most accessible poster presentations possible, thereby increasing the usefulness of the information being presented for all session participants. There are no absolute ideals for accessibility that will provide access to all people. However, by following these guidelines, the access needs of session participants are less likely to be needlessly overlooked.

The following pages will cover:

1. Using Accessible Text
2. Using Images/Graphics Without Losing Access
3. Typical Poster Sizes and Use of Space
4. Organizing Information
5. Providing Multiple Formats

Using Accessible Text

- Is poster text legible from a distance of 3 to 6 feet? (Font size)
 - o **Title:** Ideal is 158-point font (1.5 inches). Use at least 72 point font or larger for poster titles (The title should be viewable from 10 to 15 feet away to catch the attention of the reader (Conner, ND)).
 - o **Section Title:** Ideal is 56-point font (.54 inches). Use at least 46 to 56-point font for section titles (Texas Tech University, 2007).
 - o **Block Text/Body:** Ideal is 36-point font (.34 inches). At least 24-36 point font for body text.
 - o Sizes may vary depending on the viewing distance and amount of text to be included (Texas Tech University, 2007).

Figure 1: Example poster text.

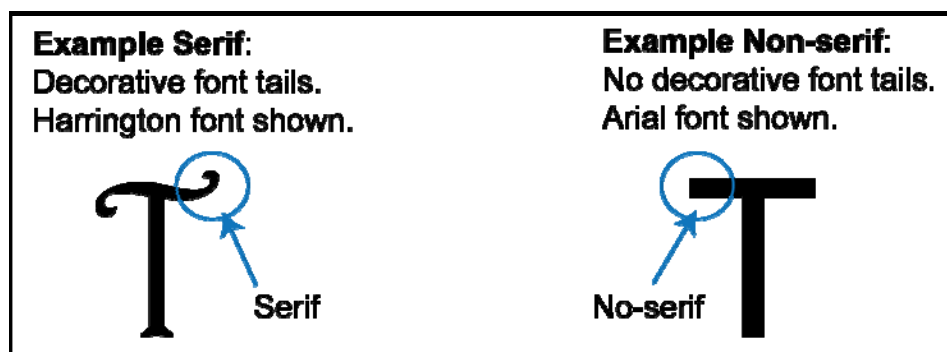
Examples in actual size are given for 158-point font for a poster title, 56-point font for a section title (heading), and 36-point for body (block) text.

Title: Ideally 1.5 inch (or 158pt shown below) font. No less than .7 inch (72pt) font.	SectionTitle: Ideally .54 inch (or 56pt shown below) font. No less than .45 inch (46pt) font.	Body Text: Ideally .34 inch (or 36pt shown below) font. No less than .26 inch (26pt) font.
AB	AB	AB

- Is the font choice legible enough? (Font type)
 - o Use non-serif (san-serif) fonts (University of Edinburgh, 2005).
 - o Serif means a small decorative line added as embellishment to the basic form or main strokes of an alphabetical letter. Typefaces are often described as being serif or sans serif (without serifs). The most common serif typeface is Times Roman. A common sans serif typeface is Helvetica. Serif fonts can be more difficult to read, particularly the more decorative, hand written, and italicized fonts (Wikipedia, June, 2007; Shaw, May, 2007).
 - o Common sans serif fonts (Shaw, May, 2007):
 - Helvetica
 - Veranda
 - Microsoft sans serif
 - For a list of fonts and explanations see:
<http://www.codestyle.org/css/font-family/sampler-SansSerif.shtml>

Figure 2: Example serif and sans serif font.

Notice the sans serif Arial font does not have decorative tails at the end of character strokes unlike the Harrington font.



- Is the font color contrasted enough with the background (Lighthouse International, 2007)?
 - o Black text with white background is the most legible with printed material.
 - o Still, you may want to use different colors. If this is important to your design for aesthetic or other reasons it is better to use combinations different from black text on white background only for larger or highlighted text, such as headlines and titles.

Figure 3: Contrast example for a heading.

Notice the white text on solid color background.

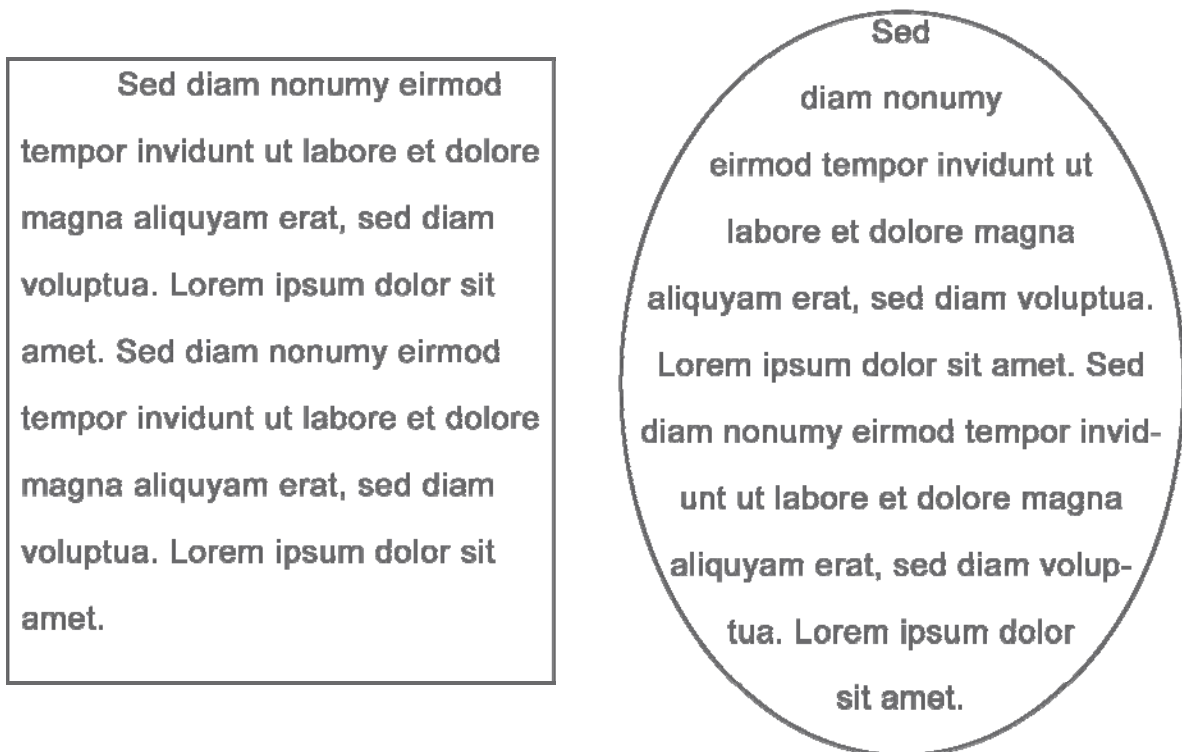


- Is the line spacing too crowded?
 - “Leading” refers to the amount of added vertical spacing between lines of type. In this text the leading or line spacing is 1.5. Using between 1.2 and 2.0 line-spacing allows the reader greater ease in moving from line to line (Wikipedia, 2007).
 - Tracking is the space between characters. If your processor allows for letter-spacing adjustments +3 is adequate.
 - You can increase tracking for headlines but you should not use less than +3 for tracking anywhere.
- Are there too many lines per text block? (See Figure 4)
 - o Text block: Could be a standard 11 by 8.5 piece of paper, which will hold about 100 words or 19 lines of text with
 - Font size 24

- Lines-pacing 1.2
 - o A text block could also be the text associated with a particular heading arrange in way other than a rectangular block.

Figure 4: Sample block text using different shaped areas for text (i.e. rectangle and oval).

Notice that lines of text are spaced using 1.5 line-spacing and the space between text characters is spaced to increase access. Arial font is used in the figure below.



Using Images/graphics without losing access

- o It is not necessary to completely avoid using images. Instead, use them creatively and ensure that all elements work together to draw the audience to understand the message.
- o Do all images used to communicate ideas have sufficient text labels and text captions (American Society of Primatologists [ASP], 2002)?
 - Captions and/or alternative text allow the audience to access more precisely what the image is intended to communicate.
- o Place images/graphics with consideration to where in the sequence of text they belong (ASP, 2002).
- o Do not place text over images (Lighthouse International, 2007).
- o Are image/graphic titles appropriately referred to in the text (ASP, 2002)?
- o Are the uses of any charts (pie, line, scatter, histograms, etc.) used appropriately and with clear textual explanations of the data?
- o Is the resolution of the images correct for large printing? Using .gif, .jpeg, .bmp, .eps, .png, etc. files that are not rendered at a sufficient resolution will cause them to blur and be of poor visual quality in your printed poster. As a general rule, use a minimum 300 dots per inch (dpi) when saving images created in programs such as Adobe™ Illustrator™, InDesign™, or Photoshop™. Avoid copying and pasting images from the web that are below 250kb for best results (TTU, 2007).

Typical Poster Sizes and Use of Space

- Typical poster sizes are:
 - o 40" x Up to 56"
 - o 34" x Up to 56"
 - o 22" x Up to 56"
- Know what size is required or available per the conference poster guidelines.
- Be wary of crowding a small poster. If possible, have a larger poster and utilize more white space to improve access

Figure 5: Crowded white space.

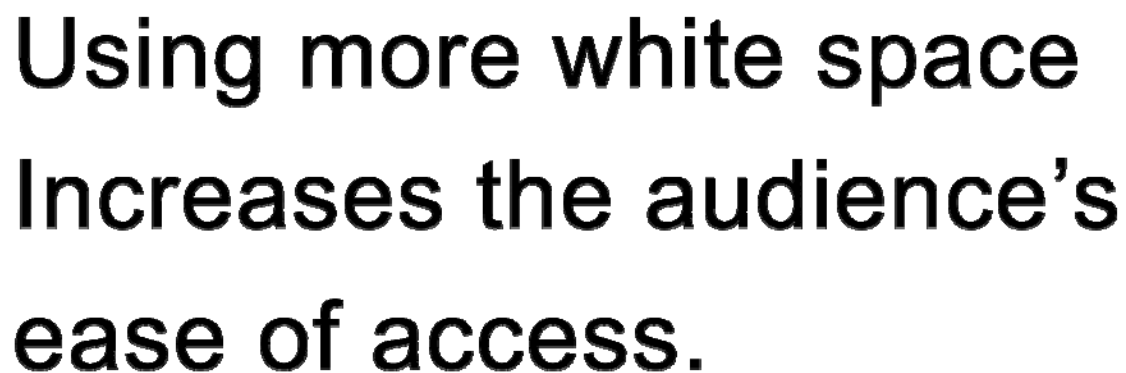
Notice the block text using insufficient line spacing and under-utilized use of white space.



**Consider using more
white space to increase
ease of access.**

Figure 6: Optimized white space.

Notice increased line spacing and efficient use of white space.



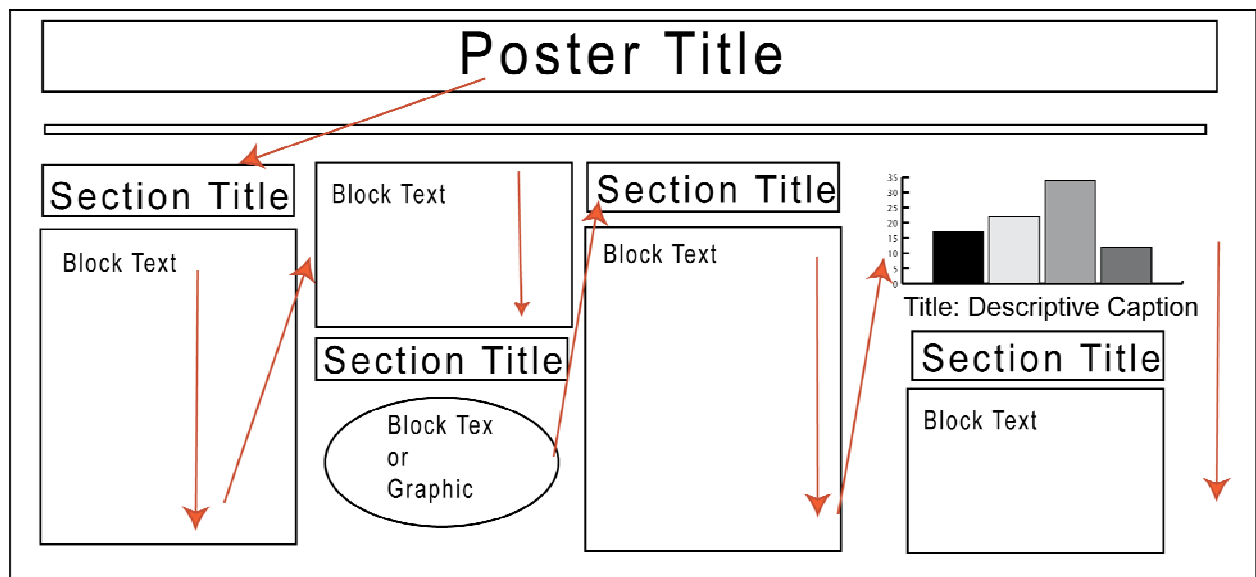
**Using more white space
Increases the audience's
ease of access.**

Organization of information

- Location of the poster title should generally be across the top of the page and displayed prominently.
 - Headings and sub headings should be displayed in relationship to the body/block text they lead.
 - An introduction to the poster should be clear, engage the audience, and inform them of the power message to take from the poster.
 - Readers should be logically led in the correct direction from heading to heading by a clear narrative and attractive while logical design of the poster.
- (See figure 7).

Figure 7: A Poster Layout

Notice that the organization flows from the title spanning the top of the page to the left column and then reads from the top of each column to the bottom progressing from left to right. Other types of organization are useful as well, such as progressively numbering each heading.



Providing multiple formats

Providing multiple formats increases the options for how to access the poster. Increasing options for access is good design (Slatin & Rush, 2002).

- Poster content should also be provided in the following formats:
 - o A data version that allows for the easy alteration of font, type size, and interpretation by a screen reader, such as:
 - Microsoft Word™ .doc/.rtf.
 - Html (Webpage)
 - o Data versions that can be provided via the web, email, or CD. CD's can provide the most immediate access to the poster content and be handed out during the poster session with printed handouts.
 - o Avoid handouts of power point slides. Text is often extremely reduced, rendering it inaccessible. Use standard letter (8.5 inch by 11 inch) size paper with 12-point sans serif fonts.
 - o Provide a large print hardcopy. Large print for standard letter pages is at least 18-point text.

References

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