

How to make a poster using PowerPoint

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Select Slide Size

Start PowerPoint: Make a New presentation – Blank.

Choose the size of your poster: Go to Design>Slide Size>Custom Slide Size (for older versions, Page Setup). In the “Slides sized” option, choose Custom. Enter the Width and Height by inches. (For Discover USC and Summer Symposium: MAX size is 48 inches wide x 48 inches tall). Click OK. Do this before you begin creating the poster! Failure to do so may result in a poster that is not printable, or not printed at the size you need. Click OK.

Adding text: In order to add text, the text needs a "container" – a Text Box. The Text Box tool may be found in the Insert menu. It looks like a square with an “A” inside it. Make a separate Text Box for each separate piece of text.

Text tips

- Try to use a minimum of 24-point type for the body text. Anything smaller may look illegible on the printed poster.
- It is better to create all of your text, charts, and tables in PowerPoint rather than copy and pasting to avoid problems with formatting and printing your poster. You can change the proportions, type size and style later.
- Allow for enough “white space” (areas where there is no text or graphics) to keep your poster from looking too overcrowded.
- **Minimum** 72-point font for the title. (Of course, the bigger the better, but 72 pt is approximately 1” tall.)
- You can import text from a word doc via copy and paste.
- You may have to change the formatting of the pasted text. It rarely survives the translation process unchanged. Try one of the "paste special" options if it is available to you.
- Individual text box backgrounds can be changed by selecting the box and changing the "fill" and/or “lines” colors.
- Do not use lettering effects such as outlined or shadowed. They do not print well on the poster.
- Bold, italic, and underline are OK. Use these sparingly.

Adding images

The two ways to add images are with Insert/Pictures and Copy and Paste.

- **Insert/Pictures:** This is the most common way of adding images/graphics to a PowerPoint document. If you have a file that is in one of several standard graphic formats (like JPG, GIF, PNG, etc.), use the **Insert> Picture>This Device** and browse your computer to select your file.
- **Copy and Paste:** Use this if you have something like an Excel graph you want to add to your document. Generally, avoid this method if you can – Copy and Paste will often only give you a low-resolution copy of a graphic.

Background

You can select a background or page color under the **Design** menu OR **Format>Background** menu. Avoid using bold, dark, solid colors as your background. (If it takes up more than 50% of the printed area.) Too much ink saturation will not dry well and can make your poster look rippled or wavy.

Under the Fill Effects window, several options can be used that will not cause this effect. Just explore with the many options shown until you find a look that you like and is still easy to read. (Note: Avoid the “patterns” option under the Fill Effects menu. They typically do NOT print well.)

Lines, Boxes, Arrows

The Insert menu also has tools to make ovals, boxes, lines, arrows, etc. When you have made one of these, you can change it (when it is selected) with the Format menu/Colors and Lines.

Design Tips

- Pictures imported from web sites are low resolution images. Use for onscreen presentations and web pages only.
- Do Spell-check, under the **Review** tab OR **Tools**.
- Use high contrast colors between foreground and background. A light background with a dark foreground is the most readable combination. e.g., a white or light-yellow background with black or dark blue text is the optimal combination. Use all other colors sparingly.
- Use common fonts to reduce the chance of printing errors: Times New Roman, Helvetica, Arial, etc.

If you are using special or non-standard fonts

NOTE: For Apple, you may need to save as PDF if embedded fonts is not an option.

- When you have completed your poster in PowerPoint, go to the **File>Options**. Depending on your version of PowerPoint, one of the options should be **Save**, choose that and you should see a check box that says "embed fonts" make sure this is checked and then name and save your file.