

# GUIDELINES FOR POSTER PRESENTATIONS



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- *What is a poster session?*
- *What is the purpose of a poster?*
- *What are the elements of an effective poster?*
- *What are the considerations for a Showcase poster?*

### WHAT IS A POSTER SESSION?

- Event where researcher presents visual display of research/project on a poster board
- A summary of what you did, how you did it, what you learned
- Short text, mixed with tables, graphs, images on a poster board
- An event where the researcher stands by the poster display during an assigned time so attendees/visitors can come and view the presentation and talk with the researcher

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A POSTER?

- To illustrate an explanation of your project to a viewer while you're there
- To explain your work when you're not there
- To make people want to read your paper or hear more about your research

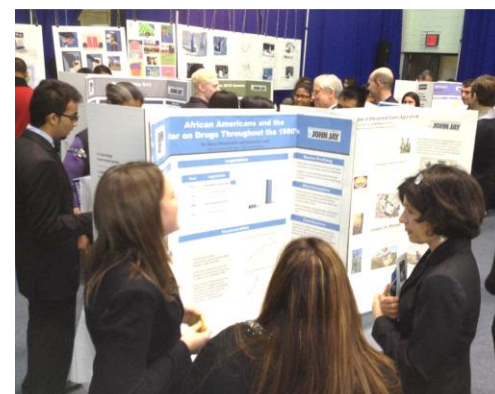
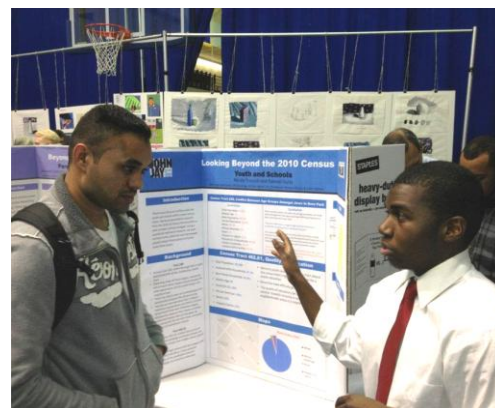
### WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE POSTER?

- Focused on single message
- Use of graphics—images/ graphs can help tell the story, use text sparingly
- Ordered—keep sequence ordered and obvious
- Concise, short, and straightforward writing—long, complex sentences are too difficult for viewers to read and process

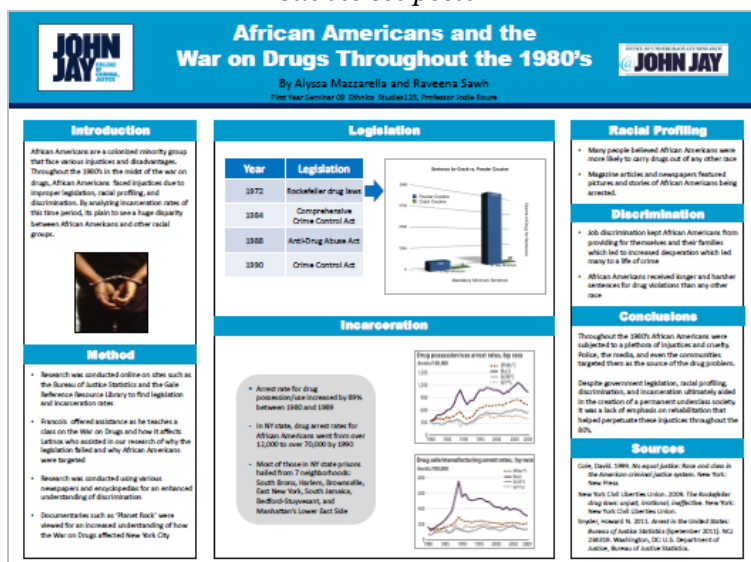
### WHAT ARE THE CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SHOWCASE POSTER?

To take advantage of the support provided for poster preparation and poster printing, make sure you:

- Use PowerPoint to create your poster
- Set up the page size at 48" width and 36" height
- Leave a one inch-margin on all sides
- Include the John Jay logo and the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) logo (see example to the right)
- For logos and poster templates, email [cpreda@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:cpreda@jjay.cuny.edu)



*Click to see poster*



- *Know your audience*
- *Be aware of size requirements*
- *Identify central message*
- *Organize your information*

### KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- Showcase audience is general audience/ public, rather than specialists/ experts
- General audience requires use of plain language and explicit context for your project

### BE AWARE OF SIZE REQUIREMENTS

Specific size requirements for Showcase posters: 12”-24”-12”; three-fold poster; total poster is 36”Wx48”H. This determines:

- What you can fit
- What you have to leave out/ edit
- How things will be organized

### IDENTIFY CENTRAL MESSAGE

Determine the single most important message or theme by asking yourself: What is the one idea I want my viewer to know about my research or walk away with? State your message and the conclusions that support your message clearly and concisely:

- This message should be reflected in the title and supported by the content of the poster
- Everything on your poster should relate back to this message—if it doesn’t reinforce your message, leave it out

### ORGANIZE YOUR INFORMATION

Regardless of what kind of project or method you use, you should always divide your info into chunks or blocks—this allows the poster to stand on its own, without you there, so a viewer can logically understand your research project. The major sections of information you will put on the poster should support the central message—stay focused on your research message and only include the essentials.

**Poster Title:** short, descriptive, and specific (may be different than your paper/project title)

**Name(s):** of you and members of your group, faculty member’s name, course title

**Introduction:** this is a quick overview of your poster—includes relevant background info as a context or understanding central theme



*Click to see entire poster*



## Objectives, Aims, Goals, or

**Problem:** state problem, question, hypothesis, thesis

- What is the research question or problem being explored by your research?
- What is the significance of your study? (in the discipline and/ or to society)
- For some projects, this might be a “Questions for Analysis” section
- Background: some posters include a background section
- Why are you doing this project or what prompted you to undertake the project?
- Include any information that is essential for your audience to understand the project and its significance—might also go in the introduction, but for humanities posters can also be a separate section
- This might be where you also include a review of some scholarly literature on the topic (a brief look at the way in which other people have studied this topic), important events, or in some historical/ cultural analyses, a discussion of values that inform your project

**Methods:** description or statement of the methods used (if applicable)

- How you conducted your project or went about doing your research
- Even if you are not using methods in a traditional sense (statistics, data, etc.) you should still include information about how you went about doing this project

**Results:** summarize the results, outcomes, or findings

- Should relate back to your message
- Use graphs, charts, figures to visually show your results
- If you haven’t finished the project, you might only talk about what you expect to find

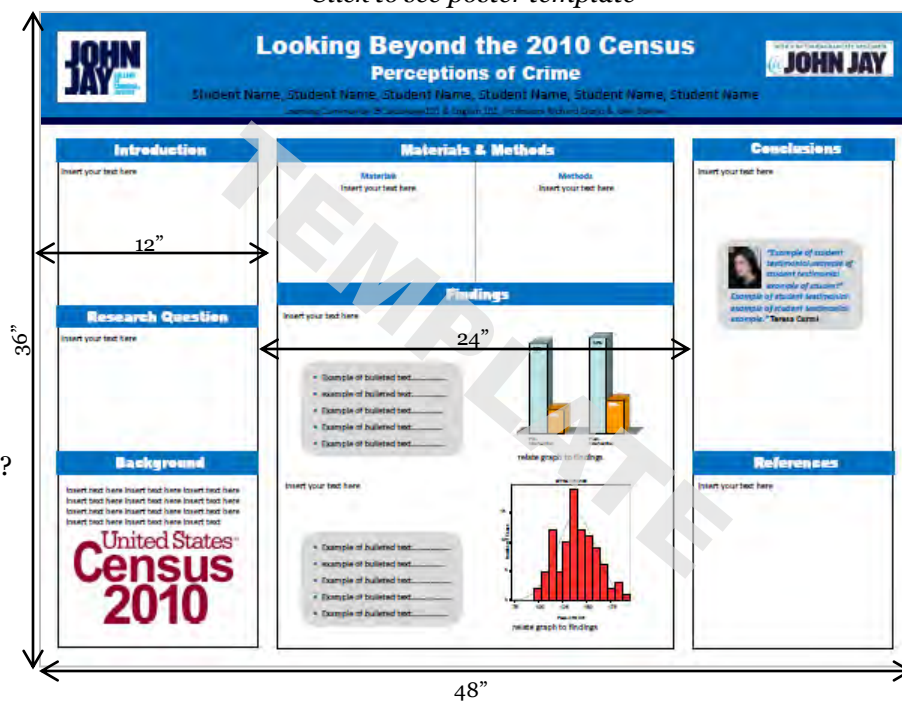
**Conclusions/ Discussion:** interpret the meaning of your results given your original questions

- Do your results confirm or contradict your research question?
- If haven’t finished, but expect certain results, why do you expect these results?
- Interpret/ give explanations for unexpected results
- What does this all mean? What you learned? What does this project mean to you?
- Any recommendations/ future directions for this work?
- Possible applications or value to society?
- If this is still a work in progress, include a “Next Steps” section

**References:** cite all references in the text and list them in a References section

- Use whatever format is appropriate for you class/ discipline

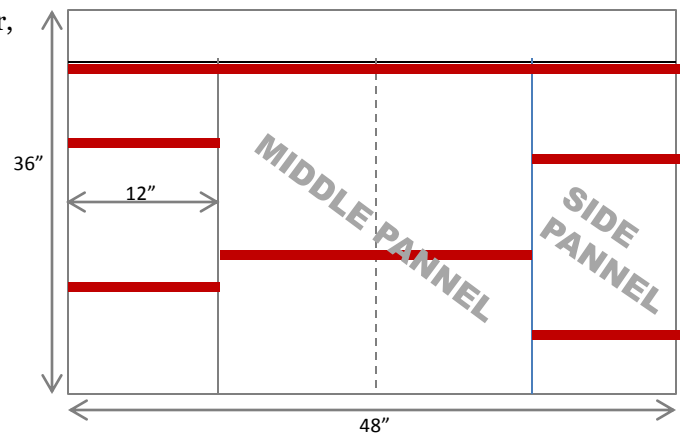
*Click to see poster template*



- *Creating a sketch*
- *Layout*
- *Background and colors*
- *Spacing*
- *Headings*
- *Font and text*
- *Graphics*

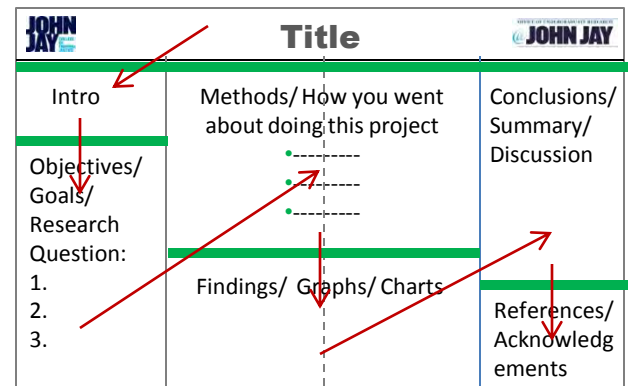
### CREATING A SKETCH

- Now that you've determined the main sections of the poster, you should begin to make a sketch
- Think visually—sketch out a small poster to the same scale as what your larger poster will be
- Your poster will be 48"Wx36"H and divided into 3 or 4 vertical sections or columns, depending on what you choose:
  - 3 sections: 12"-24"-12"
  - 4 sections: 12"-12"-12"-12"



### LAYOUT

- You want your poster to look attractive and professional. Literally, you want to “attract” people to your poster.
- Do not simply insert your paper into your poster—posters are meant to be visual
- Posters should have images, graphs, diagrams, photos, and little text
- Think of the layout as a visual grammar—certain things need to be “in place” in order to make it readable
- Column format—arrange content in 3 or 4 columns
- Organizational cues—use bullets (or numbers when appropriate)
- Always follow “reader gravity”—in English, top to bottom first, then left to right
- You don’t want too much of either text or images
- Margins should be even and balanced on all sides
- 3 to 5 rule: 3 to 5 minutes; 3 to 5 feet away
  - A viewer will likely spend only 3 to 5 minutes looking at your poster from 3 to 5 feet away
  - Your poster should be logical enough for a viewer to quickly understand it
  - Your text and images should be readable from 3 to 5 feet away
  - Use short sentences or short phrases rather than long prose



## BACKGROUND AND COLORS

- Colors should highlight, separate, define, and link information
- Stick to a theme of 2 or 3 colors
- Use light color background (only white for the Showcase posters) and dark color letters for contrast—easiest to read
- Avoid dark backgrounds with light, bright letters
- Body text is usually always black
- Avoid overly bright colors—they attract attention, but can be distracting and quickly tire eyes

## SPACING

- Open space or “white” space (may not necessarily be “white” depending on your background color) is the area not covered by text or graphics—use this to help organize the poster
- Do not need to fill every inch of the poster
- Use white space to create a border/ separation between columns or sections
- Do not want too little white space (so viewer is overwhelmed confused by clutter)
- Also don’t want too much (so that the viewer is distracted by all the white or the emptiness)
- Leave at least one inch between columns
- Leave space between sections—try to be consistent with how much space you leave
- Leave at least 1 inch of space around the edges/ margins of your poster—this is particularly important for printing

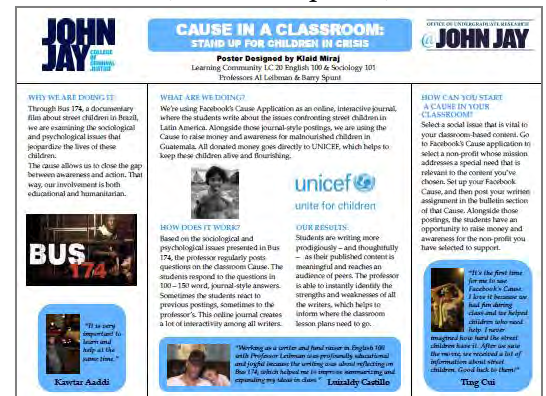
## HEADINGS

- Includes title and name, section titles, figure captions
- Most common include: Title, Introduction, Objectives, Methods, Results, Conclusion—but not necessarily (see example to the right)
- Headings should orient viewers to your message and points that support your message
- Your choices of typeface, font size, and color should make headings stand out
- They should be explicit, clear, concise
- They should help orient and move the viewer quickly through your poster
- Title has a key position—top center, usually across the top of the entire poster, should be largest text
- Try to make your title of less than 7 words—it should convey the main message
- Poster titles are often different than paper or project titles, which tend to be longer

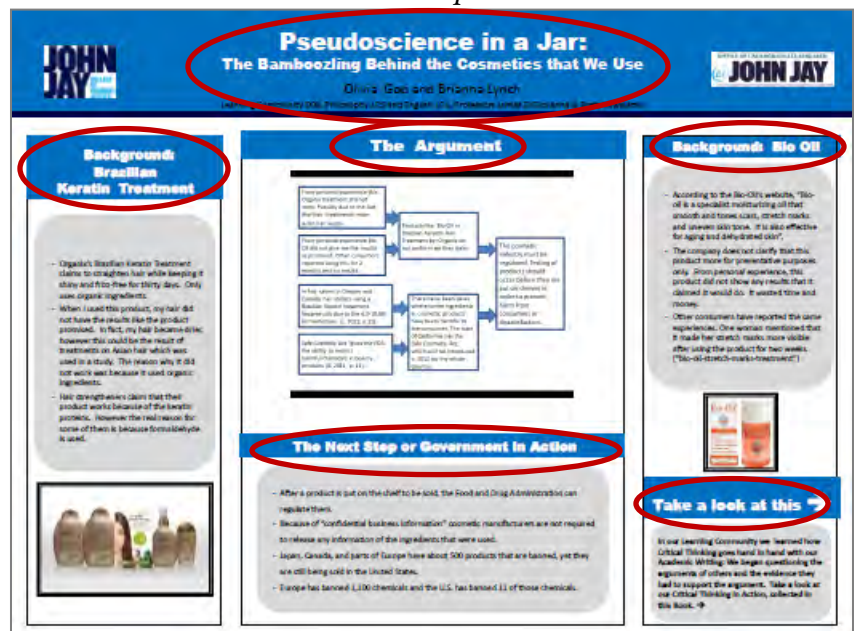
*Not easy to read*



*Good use of colors and spacing  
(Click to see poster)*



*Click to see poster*



**FONT AND TEXT**

- Use serif (e.g., Times) or sans-serif (e.g., Arial, Helvetica, Optima, Comic Sans) fonts
- Sans-serif fonts are thought to be easier to read
- Avoid using ALL CAPS, which are harder to read
- Be consistent with font type/ size for section titles and body text
- Unless this is a carefully planned artistic poster, stick with one font type

OR

- Consider a text hierarchy
- You might use one font type for all body text and a different font type for all headings; this is fine, just be consistent—all headings should be the same font; this allows the viewer to easily recognize the order of importance of info:
  - Main Title: 72 point or larger (about 1" high)
  - Author (36 to 42)
  - Section Headings or Sub-titles: 36 to 54 point
  - Body Text: 24 to 32 point (try to stay around 28 to 30)
  - References and Acknowledgements (20 to 28)
- Keep insertions of text to 50 to 75 words or fewer
- Use phrases rather than full sentences –don't create long paragraphs of prose
- Left justify text; avoid right-justifying and centering (you can center the main title/ name(s))
- Use at least 1.5 spacing for everything except references
- **Tip:** *If you print your poster on a standard piece of paper, you should be able to read all of it, including text in figures. If you can't, it might be too small.*

**GRAPHICS**

- Graphics, tables, illustrations, photos, or artwork can be the centerpiece of your poster—but avoid using too many images such that the poster might look cluttered
- The reason for an image should be clear and tied to the text, not just for visual appeal
- Good graphs communicate relationships quickly, are simple and clean—should be visible from 3 to 5 feet away
- Avoid using small graphics downloaded from the web—they usually have very low resolution and are not good for poster printing
- Check for good contrast/ brightness on a home or school printer—an image may not look the same on the screen as it does when printed

Title

Author

Headings

Body Text

References/  
Acknowledgements

**WHY WE ARE DOING IT:**

Through **Bus 174**, a documentary film about street children in Brazil, we are examining the sociological and psychological issues that jeopardize the lives of these children.

The cause allows us to close the gap between awareness and action. That way, our involvement is both educational and humanitarian.



- *Editing and evaluating your poster*
- *Presenting your poster*

### EDITING AND EVALUATING YOUR POSTER

- Edit, edit, and edit—simplify your phrases, reduce sentence complexity, delete unnecessary details
- Have peers comment on poster drafts
- Evaluate your own work using a quick evaluation
- Always zoom to “fit” to see all of your poster; zoom to 100% to see actual printed size
- Move back 3–5 feet to see if it’s still readable
- Zoom to 50% for editing



### PRESENTING YOUR POSTER

- Dress in business attire
- Arrive early at your display site
- Make sure you’re at your poster during the designated poster time
- Use your poster as a visual aid—don’t read it
- Prepare 1 minute, 2 minute, and 3 minute “tours” of your poster
- Tell viewers the context of your problem/ why it’s important (Intro)
- Your objective and what you did (Objective and Methods)
- What you discovered (Results) or learned and
- What the answer means in terms of the context (Discussion)
- Prepare a 2–3 minute verbal summary—a quick walkthrough of the poster
- If someone said, “tell me about your poster,” what would you say in 3 minutes?
- Don’t read the poster
- Give the big picture, why the problem is important, findings & recommendations



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