

Surviving Your First ACS Undergraduate Poster Presentation

BY ACS STAFF

Is the mere thought of presenting your first poster at an ACS local, regional, or national meeting causing you to rethink your choice of major? If so, take comfort in the fact that you're not alone. At the upcoming 243rd ACS National Meeting in San Diego, CA, most of the nearly 1,200 students who will be presenting their posters at the Undergraduate Research Poster Session are first-time presenters. The whole process is also less intimidating if you know what to expect as a poster presenter at an ACS undergraduate poster session.

The basics

First, know the basics. Depending on the size of the poster session, you will likely present your poster in a large hotel room or hall filled with narrow rows of poster boards. If you are presenting a poster, approximately 30 minutes before the start time of the session, you will be allowed into the assigned area to install your poster. Authors are responsible for mounting their posters before the opening of the poster session. ACS supplies the poster numbers — which are placed in the upper corner of each



16

How to Design a Scientific Poster

BY ANGELA HOFFMAN

A scientific poster is not an enlarged version of a paper. A poster summarizes your research project and follows a standard format for reporting scientific results.

- Know the poster board specifications. Specifications vary widely among groups and organizations.
- Craft your poster to tell a single story.
- The story has to be obvious and should be clear to the reader. Eliminate jargon.
- Don't attempt to tell the entire research history of your project. Present only enough data to support your conclusions and show the originality of the work.

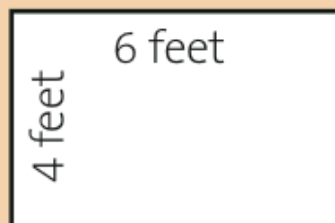
- Provide photos, illustrations, and graphs where needed to clarify the story. All illustrations need captions and must be referred to in the narrative.
- Use full sentences and your very best English, and be succinct.
- It's important to make the print large enough to read easily from 3 feet away. Title lettering should be about 2" to 3" tall (5 to 7.5 cm). Subheading lettering should be 1/2" to 1" tall (1.25 to 2.5 cm). Body text lettering should be approximately 24 points tall (1/4" or 0.625 cm).
- Divide the poster into labeled sections (such as Title, Authors, Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion/Conclusions).
- Use the minimum amount of details in the Methods section. You will be there to fill in the details.
- Always be generous with acknowledgments.
- Use a solid pastel color for the background. If you use a patterned background, make sure it's non-distracting. Don't be fancy!
- Proofread and get suggestions from others, especially your advisor, before you print.
- Copy your poster onto a flash drive to create a backup copy of your poster. *ixc*

Angela Hoffman is a professor of chemistry at the University of Portland in Portland, OR.



ACS Poster Specifications

Each horizontal poster board at ACS meetings measures 4 feet high x 6 feet wide, including the frame, and all presentations must be confined to the poster board itself. Computer display equipment, sound or projection equipment, free-standing or three-dimensional displays, demonstrations/experiments, or tables for handout materials are not permitted in the poster session. [irc](#)



poster board by ACS staff — and the poster pins. Each poster number corresponds with the number appearing beside a listing of the poster in the program book. Your poster should be up and ready to present no less than 15 minutes before the start of your poster session. Immediately after the close of the session, you are responsible for removing your poster. Even if you're in a rush to get someplace else, don't leave your poster behind — ACS does not assume responsibility for materials left beyond those time limits.

Presentation times and rules at ACS regional meetings vary widely, so it's important to know what time you will be presenting your poster. As a rule of thumb, at ACS national meetings, once the Undergraduate Research Poster Session begins, authors who have been assigned even-numbered posters will present their posters for the first hour of the poster session. Those with odd-numbered posters present their posters for the second hour.

How to Communicate Your Research to Others

BY BRENT ZNOSKO

You have invested months, or perhaps years, mastering chemistry concepts and conducting your research project. Now the final challenge is to articulately communicate your results to others.

1. **Practice, practice, practice** presenting your poster to yourself and to your advisor and labmates. You should have a solid understanding of your research and be familiar with other related research.
2. **Always introduce yourself** and make sure to get your visitors' names.
3. Before you begin your presentation, **ask visitors about their background knowledge about the topic**. If they are experts, you do not have to go into detail about the background and introduction. If they know little about your topic, you may want to spend more time on the background. For example, I heard one poster presenter go into a ton of needless detail about the background, even though one of my papers was actually referenced on the poster. The presenter simply didn't realize who I was.
4. **Be prepared to provide a brief, one-minute presentation** about your poster. If visitors are interested in learning more, they will ask you questions. With many posters in a session, viewers do not want to get "trapped" at a poster that they are only moderately interested in.
5. **Do not read the poster to your visitors**. They already know how to read! [irc](#)

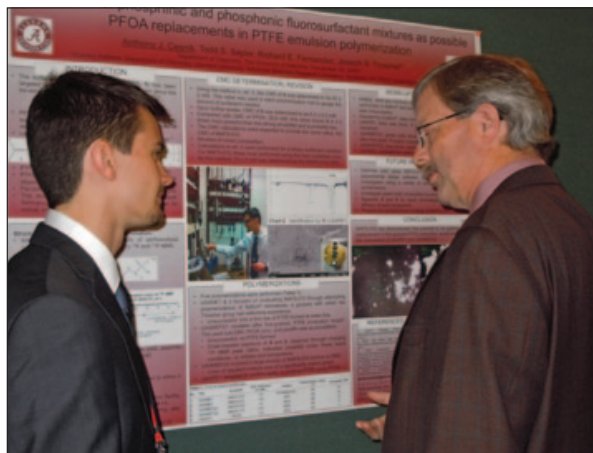
Brent Znosko is an associate professor of chemistry at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, MO.

Make smart use of your spare time. The poster session is a great time to network with other students who are presenting their posters and with session visitors, so make it a point to visit other posters during your free hour.

Exude professionalism

Making a positive first impression is important, so dress and act professionally. Wear comfortable shoes — you may be standing on cement during your presentation time. Show enthusiasm about your research. You will be talking to viewers who may be undergraduate or graduate students, faculty, members of industry, or others with an interest in chemistry. Not everyone will be familiar with your area of research, so before you begin describing your research project, find out what they know about your research area. Then, try to adapt your presentation accordingly.

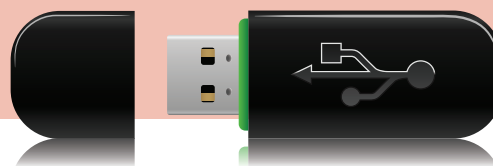
Be sure you have a solid understanding of your research.



At an ACS poster session, you may be talking to undergraduate or graduate students, faculty, members of industry, or others with an interest in chemistry. Find out what they know about your research area and adapt your presentation accordingly.

Be Prepared for the Unexpected

Here's a lesson you don't want to learn the hard way — posters have a way of getting misplaced, left behind in cabs, buses, or cars, or lost in hotels and baggage claim areas at airports, so having a backup copy that you can print out in an emergency can be a lifesaver! Be prepared for the unexpected! Before you leave for the meeting, copy your poster files onto a flash drive and bring it with you to the meeting. [irc](#)



Practice presenting a one-minute summary of your research. Ask a friend to listen to your summary and provide feedback. You should also be familiar with prior research done in the area.

It's also a good idea to bring business cards to give to those who visit your poster and to others you meet while networking. Include your name, address, phone numbers, degree major, and graduation date. It is also wise to include a professional objective, such as graduate school, an internship, or an employment position. Business cards will help you to appear more professional and make you more memorable to those you meet.

When you offer your business card, be sure to ask your visitors for their business cards as well. Write a note about your conversation with each person who visits your poster on the back of their business card, and follow up by e-mail within one week after the meeting. In the e-mail, you might thank your visitors for stopping by your poster, answer any questions they had, or send them more information pertaining to your poster.

If there is a point at which no one is visiting your poster, resist the temptation to text or talk on your cell phone or talk with nearby friends. These actions will make visitors less likely to approach your poster. Also, be aware that some visitors may be evaluating you for graduate school or for a professional position, so exude professionalism at all times.

Follow up

Come equipped with a notepad and pen so that you can write down suggestions from visitors about your poster, future directions of your research, or where to apply to graduate school. After the end of the poster session, jot down notes of what went well with your poster presentation and what you hope to improve upon for the next time. Include any new ideas for additional research or experiments relating to your research, and any unanswered questions you may need to discuss with your advisor. Feel proud that you have taken the next step on your professional pathway! [irc](#)