GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING POSTERS
USING POWERPOINT™ PRESENTATION SOFTWARE

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Overview

This 6-page document* details the procedures for preparing posters using PowerPoint™ presentation software with a PC. Although other software programs can be used to prepare posters, the authors elected to provide guidelines for using the PowerPoint™ program because it is widely used by academics.

> *For additional information on using presentation software to construct posters and graphs, see the companion document, "Applying Technology to Facilitate Poster Presentations" in Teaching of Psychology (in press).

Outline of Contents

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Getting Started

Selecting A Slide Layout

When you initially open the PowerPoint™ (1997) program and indicate your choice of a blank presentation, a New Slide dialog box will appear in which several AutoLayouts are displayed. Select the option with no visible formatting (usually located in the lower right-hand corner), then click the OK button.

Drawing Toolbar

If the Drawing toolbar is not visible at the bottom of the screen, select View from the menu bar, click Toolbars on the drop-down menu, then select the Drawing toolbar. There you will find a variety of AutoShapes (objects such as rectangles, ovals, hexagons, and circles) into which you may insert titles, section headers, etc.

Setting the Size, Orientation, and Background Color

To set the size of your poster, click File on the menu bar, select Page Setup on the drop-down menu, then type in the desired dimensions. For a large poster, set the poster dimensions at 50% of its intended finished size to reduce the drain on computer resources. For example, for a 30" x 36" poster, set the poster size at 15" x 18". If you do reduce the poster size in this manner, use at least a 14-point bold font for the body text and an increasingly larger font size for the section headers and title respectively. When you eventually submit the computer file to a printing facility to prepare the actual poster, specify that the file should be enlarged to 200% of its original size prior to printing. That way, the font size of body text on the actual poster will be perceived as 28-point font.

To set the orientation of your poster, click File on the menu bar, select Page Setup on the drop-down menu, then select either Portrait or Landscape in the area designated for Slide Orientation. To choose the background color for the entire poster, click Format on the menu bar, select Background from the drop-down menu, then select the desired color from the menu of options that appears.

 "Zoom" Level

The zoom (or magnification) level controls how much of the poster is seen on the screen and determines the readability of the typing. The Zoom Level box is typically located on the right-hand side of the Standard toolbar. The amount of "zoom" needed to view a poster depends on the size of the poster and font selected to create the poster. For example, if you specify a 15" x 18" poster size, setting the level at about 25% allows inspection of the entire layout. Setting the level at 40% is about the minimum that will allow you to read what you type, using 14-point bold font.

Initial Placement, Sizing, and Basic Editing of Objects

Your PowerPoint™ poster will most likely include a combination of objects (text boxes, AutoShapes, charts, tables, and pictures or ClipArt). In this section, we describe how to insert and resize each of these objects and outline basic editing procedures applicable to them, beginning with the use of a text box or AutoShape to create a poster title. In a subsequent section, we describe more detailed formatting and arrangement options.

Creating a Poster Title

To prepare a poster title, use either a text box or an AutoShape. To create a text box, click Insert on the Standard toolbar, then Text Box on the drop-down menu. Position the cursor where you want the text box to appear, click the left mouse button, then start typing. To change the font or font size, highlight the title, click Format on the Standard toolbar, then Font on the drop-down menu. Select the desired font, font style, and font size, then click the OK button. To resize the text box to extend across the entire poster,

click the border of diagonal stripes that surrounds the text box. The border will change to fine dots. Position the cursor over one of the white squares (handles), click and hold the left mouse button, then drag the handle until the textbox stretches across the poster. To center your title, highlight it, then click the Align Center button on the Standard toolbar. In the same text box, continue by typing the authors' names on the next line, and the authors' affiliations on the following line.

To create an AutoShape, click AutoShapes on the Drawing toolbar, select Basic Shapes on the pop-up menu, then select the desired AutoShape. Position the cursor where you want the AutoShape to appear, click the left mouse button, then start typing. The procedures for changing the font, font style, and font size, for resizing an AutoShape, and for centering text within an AutoShape are the same as the procedures for performing these operations in a text box.

Creating Section Headers and Objects for Presentation of Textual Information

To create section headers (e.g., Abstract, Background, Method, etc.), text boxes, or AutoShapes in which to present textual information, follow the procedures outlined for creating a poster title. Adjust sizes to suit your overall poster layout. When you initially place objects on your poster, do not be overly concerned with precise sizing. Rather, consider what objects you require to present effectively the information needed to convey your message. In the Final Steps section of this article, we offer suggestions for more precise sizing and alignment.

Tables and Charts

If you have previously prepared tables or charts using Excel™ or Word™ software, the simplest way to incorporate them in a PowerPoint™ poster is to use the copy and paste commands. For example, to insert a table from Excel™ in a poster, open the Excel™ file, highlight the desired cells and copy them (using the Copy icon on the Standard toolbar or "Ctrl + C" key combination). Then, return to your PowerPoint™ poster file and paste the cells on your poster (using the Paste icon on the Standard toolbar or the "Ctrl + V" key combination). To resize a table, first select the table (if you are not currently editing it), position the cursor over one of the white squares (handles), click and hold the left mouse button, then drag the handle until the table is the desired size. To edit the data in a table after the table has been inserted on your PowerPoint™ slide, first select the table by positioning the cursor within the table, then click the left mouse button. Position your cursor inside the table and double click the left mouse button. A braid-like border will appear. The standard PowerPoint™ toolbar will change to resemble that of Excel™. You may then edit the data in any cell in the same manner as you would using Excel™ software. To enhance the readability of the data during the editing process, increase the zoom level.

Similarly, to insert a chart from an Excel™ sheet, select the chart in the Excel™ file, copy it (using the Copy icon on the Standard toolbar or "Ctrl + C" key combination), return to your PowerPoint™ poster file, then paste the chart on your poster (using the Paste icon on the Standard toolbar or the "Ctrl + V" key combination). To resize a chart, first select the chart (if you are not currently editing it), position the cursor over one of the white squares (handles), click and hold the left mouse button, then drag the handle until the chart is the desired size. To edit the data or reformat a chart after the chart has been inserted on your PowerPoint™ slide, first select the chart by positioning the cursor within the chart, then click the left mouse button. Position your cursor inside the chart and double click the left mouse button. A braid-like border will appear. The standard PowerPoint™ toolbar will change to resemble that of Excel™. Using the left mouse button, click on the plot area of the chart. A Chart menu will appear on the toolbar. You may then reformat the chart (style, fill, color, etc.) using the options on this Chart menu, as you would using Excel™ software. To change a data entry, when the braid-like border is active, scroll to the area in which the source data appear. Highlight the cell you wish to change, then type in the revised entry. To change the wording of the labels in your legend, type the revised entry in the stub (the column on the extreme left) of the table that includes your source data. Scroll back to your starting point so that the chart itself appears in the enclosed area. You will notice the effect of the data entry or labeling changes.

To insert a table from Word™ on your poster, open the file, then copy and paste the desired material, using the same procedure as for copying a table from an Excel™ document. When the braid-like border

appears, the standard PowerPoint™ toolbar will change to resemble that of Word™. A Table menu will appear on the toolbar. You may then reformat the table (inserting or deleting rows, hiding gridlines, changing data alignment) using the options on this Table menu, as you would in Word™.

To transfer textual material from Word™ and retain the ability to edit the material on your PowerPoint™ poster, copy the material from the Word™ file into a PowerPoint™ text box, rather than pasting it directly on the PowerPoint™ slide. First, select the material from the Word™ file, copy it (using the Copy icon on the Standard toolbar or "Ctrl + C" key combination), return to your PowerPoint™ poster file, then insert a text box (as described previously). When the text box appears, instead of typing text, paste the textual material from Word™ into the text box (using the Paste icon on the Standard toolbar or the "Ctrl + V" key combination). You may find it necessary to resize the text box to accommodate the text, or to change the font or font size of the text to fit in the area chosen for your text box.

You may also create tables and charts directly in PowerPoint™. To create a table in PowerPoint™, click the Insert Table icon on the Standard toolbar. The PowerPoint™ toolbar changes to resemble that of Word™. Fill in column headings and data values, using commands from the Table menu. To draw lines, click Format on the Standard tool bar, then select Borders and Shading on the drop-down menu.

To create a graph in PowerPoint™, click the Insert Chart icon on the Standard toolbar. The standard PowerPoint™ toolbar will change to resemble that of Excel™. A Chart menu will appear on the toolbar. A presentation data sheet and a default bar chart with a braid-like border will appear on the PowerPoint™ slide. On the presentation data sheet, replace existing column headings with X-axis categories and existing stub entries with items to appear in the legend. Then, enter your data. To edit your chart, use the options on the Chart menu. To change the chart style (e.g., bar, line, pie), click Chart on the Standard toolbar, then select Chart Type on the drop-down menu. To add axes titles, alter gridlines or reformat the legend, click Chart on the Standard toolbar, then select Chart Options on the drop-down menu, and choose the desired options. To format other chart items, right-click on the item (e.g. axis, data bars, chart area, walls of a 3D chart), then select desired options in the dialog box that appears.

Pictures and Clip Art

To insert a picture you have saved to your hard drive or disk, click Insert on the Standard toolbar, select Picture from the drop-down menu, then select From File. Browse to locate the appropriate file, then click the Insert button. To access clip art that is frequently included in the Microsoft Office packet of programs, select Clip Art (instead of From File).

Formatting and Arranging Objects

After you have inserted objects on your slide, the next step is to format and arrange them to maximize the impact of your visual presentation. In this section, we describe basic procedures accomplishing this goal and other options for enhancing the appearance of objects on your poster.

Formatting Text Boxes and AutoShapes

To format a text box or an AutoShape, right-click anywhere inside it, then select either Format Text Box or Format AutoShape from the pop-up menu. The dialog box in Figure 1 (similar for text boxes and AutoShapes) illustrates some available options. To select a background color with which to fill your object, click the Colors and Lines tab. Then, in the Fill area, click the arrow to the right of the Color entry box. You may select from the colors that initially appear or click on More Colors for a wider range of options. Clicking Fill Effects will lead you to another dialog box with several tabs. By using these tabs, you can create one- or two-color shading gradients, choose one of several textures (e.g., wood grain, basket weave, tile board) or patterns (stripes, dots, grids, checkerboard), or use a picture as a fill.

To create a border around a text box or an AutoShape, right-click anywhere inside it, then select either Format Text Box or Format AutoShape from the pop-up menu. In the dialog box that appears (similar for text boxes and AutoShapes), select options in the Lines area to choose your preferred line color, type of

dash, style, and weight. To include bullets in a text box or AutoShape, click the Bullets icon on the Standard toolbar.

<u>Moving and Grouping Objects</u>

To move an object, first select it by clicking inside it. For text boxes and AutoShapes, a second click on the border with diagonal lines will yield the border of fine dots that is appropriate for repositioning. For objects other than text boxes and AutoShapes, a single click creates a solid border that is appropriate for repositioning. Then, position the cursor over a border location other than a white square (handle) until the cursor becomes a four-headed arrow. Click and hold the left mouse button. Move the cursor to drag the object to the location you have chosen. In the Final Steps section of this article, we offer suggestions for more precise alignment.

To facilitate rearrangement of objects on your poster, it may be advantageous to group some of them into a single object (so they can be moved as a unit, retaining their relative position to each other). To group objects, select one by right-clicking on it. When a border with the white squares appears, hold down the Shift key, then select the next object. Click Draw on the Drawing toolbar at the bottom of the screen, then select Group from the pop-up menu. To confirm that objects are grouped, check that the objects are surrounded by a single set of white boxes (handles), rather than individual sets of handles for each object. To reverse the grouping procedure, click any object in the group. Click Draw on the Drawing toolbar, then select Ungroup from the pop-up menu.

<u>Other Options on the Drawing Toolbar</u>

In addition to using the Drawing toolbar to insert familiar shapes (such as rectangles and squares) and for grouping and ungrouping objects, you can use it to create other shapes and add a variety of special effects to objects on your poster. For example, complementing the selection of Basic Shapes, the AutoShape menu contains Lines, Block Arrows, Stars, and shapes commonly used on flowcharts. On the Drawing Toolbar, you will also find buttons that permit you to draw lines and arrows. Additionally, buttons on the far right of the Drawing toolbar permit you to create a shadow around a selected object or to enhance an object's appearance by introducing a 3-D effect. If you need further information about the use of these options, we suggest that you explore the Help menu on the Standard PowerPoint™ toolbar or consult a PowerPoint™ manual (e.g., Sagman, 1997).

Final Steps

When you are satisfied with the content and general arrangement of objects on your poster, you are ready to precisely size and align objects and to print a reduced copy of your poster. In this section, we describe these final steps.

<u>Precision Sizing</u>

To fine-tune object size, right-click in an object, select Format on the pop-up menu, then click the Size tab in the Format dialog box that appears. Adjust the Height and Width settings in the boxes provided. To change the amount of space between the text and the borders of a text box (or AutoShape), click the Text Box tab in the Format dialog box, then adjust the entries in the Internal Margin entry boxes.

<u>Final Alignment</u>

To fine-tune object alignment, right-click in an object, select Format on the pop-up menu, then click the Position tab. Adjust the Horizontal and Vertical position settings in the boxes provided. As an alternative, select an item by clicking in it. When a border of fine dots (for text boxes and AutoShapes) or a solid line (for other objects) appears, use the arrow keys on the keyboard to "nudge" the object either horizontally or vertically.

<u>Printing a Handout</u>

To print a handout of a poster, click File on the menu bar, then select Print on the drop-down menu. Click the Properties button, then select the orientation (Portrait or Landscape) and paper size you will be using for your handout. Click the OK button. In the "Print what" area of the Print dialog box, select Slides, select the Scale to Fit Paper box, then click the OK button. Depending on the color scheme of your poster and the capabilities of the printer connected to your computer, you may choose to create a black and white, grayscale, or color version of your handout.

Production of Poster

Printing the poster requires a wide format full-color printer. If your institution does not have the necessary equipment, nationwide printing facilities often do. At such non-institutional providers, the cost is approximately $9 per sq. ft., with a maximum width of approximately 36". (Prior to creating your poster, we recommend that you determine what, if any, size limitations are imposed by printing equipment available in your area.) Lamination, if desired, is "extra"; the maximum width for a laminated poster is typically 24". At first glance, the cost of printing a PowerPoint™ poster may appear prohibitive, particularly in relation to the cost of preparing a conventional poster. However, considering the cost of poster board, backing for individual items, adhesive, and professional services for cutting poster board, the incremental cost of a PowerPoint™ poster becomes more justifiable, particularly given its potentially greater impact on audiences.

References

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Sagman, S. W. (1997). <u>Running Microsoft PowerPoint 97™.</u> Redmond, WA: Microsoft Press.