

# STARS@SLU 2025 Poster Design Tips



## Plan Your Poster Layout

Before you start designing:

- Think about the flow of your presentation: beginning, middle, and end. Organize your thoughts by sketching a layout of your poster. Decide where each part will go, such as the title, main text, images, and key points.
- Use visuals, such as images, data, charts, and diagrams, to tell your story effectively. These are the heart of your poster. Select visuals carefully in a way that they effectively support your message. Include at least one large, eye-catching image to draw people in. Choose high-resolution images for the best print quality.
- Choose a brief, positive title that highlights your main finding/result. Use sentence case for the title, and make it as large as possible by removing unnecessary logos and minimizing the size of author and affiliation details.
- Since your poster already summarizes your work, including a formal abstract is unnecessary.
- Poster sizes can vary, but 48" × 36" is a common format, either landscape or portrait. Always confirm the required dimensions before you start designing. Setting the size early will save you time and effort later.

## Design for Readability

There are many font options that work well for posters, but keeping it simple is usually best. Here are some font and formatting guidelines to help you create a clean, readable design:

- Use short blocks of text or bullet points to help the reader easily read through your content.
- Choose sans serif fonts like Arial or Verdana. These fonts are easier to read and more visible from a distance.
- Limit your font choices to no more than two types. Using too many fonts can distract the viewer and make the poster feel cluttered.
- Avoid decorative fonts, for instance, do not use shadow styles, since they make the text harder to read.
- Avoid excessive text. Aim for approximately 20% text, 40% visuals, and 40% empty space.
- Leave breathing space around text blocks and sections to prevent a crowded appearance.
- Avoid switching fonts to highlight key points. Use **bold** or *italics* instead to maintain sentence flow and consistency.
- Do not use ALL CAPS for body text, as it reduces readability.
- Left-align your text. Fully justified text can create uneven spacing between words, making it harder to read.
- Avoid underlining for emphasis, it may look like a hyperlink. Use **bold** or *italic* instead.
- Proofread carefully for typos and inconsistent formatting to maintain a polished, professional appearance.

Modified from [https://www.posternerd.com/tutorials/poster-design-layout?signs\\_redirect#fontsizes](https://www.posternerd.com/tutorials/poster-design-layout?signs_redirect#fontsizes)

- Maintain a clear font structure, such as a large title, medium headings, and smaller body text, for better organization.
- Make sure titles and headings stand out by using larger font sizes than the rest of the text, but avoid making them overly large. Since each poster is different, font sizes may need to be adjusted to fit your specific layout. Here are some general font size suggestions for a standard 48" × 36" poster:

**Title:** 85 pt

**Authors:** 56 pt

**Sub-headings:** 36 pt

**Body text:** 24 pt

**Captions:** 18 pt

These sizes help ensure your text remains readable from 5-7 feet away.

## Colors and Backgrounds

- Use high contrast between text and background to ensure all content is easy to read. Avoid red/green combinations for accessibility. When choosing colors for your poster, using 2-3 colors will give the best look. Too many colors make it look chaotic and unprofessional, but having no color makes it dull and plain.
- Avoid busy or distracting backgrounds. A solid color or a simple gradient usually works best. Make sure your background color complements your font color for clear readability. If a background is not necessary to send your message, it is best to leave it out entirely.
- If you are creating images on the computer, note that colors may appear differently on your screen. A light color for the background with a dark colored text or a darker background with light text is often a good choice. The greater the contrast between the font color and the background color, the easier it will be to see and read. Always try to avoid bright color combinations for accessibility.

## Final Check before Printing

Before submitting your poster for printing, view it at 100% zoom to carefully check all images and graphics. Many graphics, especially those copied from websites or other documents, do not enlarge well and may appear blurry when printed. If an image looks blurry at full size, replace it with a higher-resolution version. When you are ready to print, first save your file as a .ppt or .pptx, then open it and save a final version as a .pdf for printing.