

PCNE guidance for poster presentation at a conference: How to write an abstract for a conference submission, design a poster and present its content during a poster walk

1. Background and situation

PCNE conferences enable researchers to present their results during poster walks. The preliminary condition is to have submitted an abstract that has been accepted by PCNE reviewers. Some few requirements are given to authors regarding the abstract (max number of words and key sections) and the poster (size, format).

Authors might need further guidance to create appealing documents and enhance their chance of being accepted.

2. Aim of this guidance

This is a step-by-step guide to help researchers write an effective abstract for a conference submission (see 3.); design a visually engaging poster (see 4.) and deliver a clear and compelling presentation (see 5.).

3. How to write an abstract

- Start with a clear title. The title should be descriptive and concise. It should reflect the main idea of your research. Make it intriguing but straightforward enough to convey the subject matter. Remember that the title of the abstract will be the title of the poster.
- Background. Begin with few sentences introducing the problem or research question you are addressing. This will explain why this issue is important or relevant to the field.
- Aims. Clearly state the objective or purpose of your research. What was the main goal of your study, and what were you hoping to discover or prove?
- Methods. Briefly describe the approach you used to carry out the research. This might include the research design, data collection methods, theoretical framework, tools or techniques used, or any particular analysis performed.
- Results. Summarize the main findings of your work. Include specific quantitative or qualitative results that showcase the significance of your work. You don't need to include all the details, just highlight what is most important with the key outcomes. Double check that the results you are focusing on are meeting the stated aim and are matching the title.
- Conclusion. Provide a brief conclusion of your findings. What does your research mean for the field? What are the broader implications of your work? If relevant, mention recommendations.

TIPPS AND TRCIKS

Keep it concise and focused. Avoid unnecessary details. The abstract should be brief, to the point, with short sentences, and written in clear language. You want the reviewer to quickly understand what your research is about, why it matters, and how you approached it. Make sure the abstract is well-organized and flows logically.

Check for spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. A clean, error-free abstract presents you as a professional and ensures your ideas are communicated clearly. Ask your colleagues to proofread your abstract.

Double-check all conference-specific requirements, such as formatting, file type (e.g., PDF, DOCX), and submission procedures. Submit on time—deadlines are strict.

4. How to design a poster from an accepted abstract

A conference poster is designed to communicate key aspects of your study to your audience quickly, with the help of visuals, short text, and clear organization. Remember that people will not read every word on the poster, so focus on conveying your message with minimal text and strong visuals. Do NOT copy-paste the sentences of your abstract! An A0 poster (84.1 cm x 118.9 cm or 33.1 in x 46.8 in) is a large format, so you'll need to be strategic about how to display your content.

First, design your layout and structure the poster with a logical flow. Often, the layout follows a column structure (e.g., two columns), but feel free to experiment. Organize your poster in three sections. The sections are of different sizes, the middle section being the largest. Top section: title and author(s) information, institutional affiliations including logos. Middle section: introduction, methods, and results (highlight these with visuals). Bottom section: conclusions, references, with date, place and logo of the conference, potentially your picture and your email address. You can use interactive elements like QR codes that lead to your poster or supplementary content. Build blocks and align text and visuals, ensuring balance and order.

Second, select fonts and colors. Use large, readable fonts like Verdana, Arial and similar. Remember that headings and text should be legible from a distance of approximately 1 meter. Titles should be around 72 pt, subtitles 40-48 pt, and body text around 24-36 pt. Make sure there is enough contrast between the text and background. Use the color scheme of your institution or colors with high contrast. Limit the number of colors to around 3-4 to maintain simplicity and coherence. Backgrounds should be light (light grey or white) with darker text. Ensure consistent font styles and sizes throughout the poster to create a polished and professional look.

Third, define your visual elements (graphics, tables, pictures) to illustrate your key results. Make sure your visuals are clear and easy to interpret. Each figure or table should have a concise caption explaining what it represents. Don't forget to refer to the visuals in your text body. Ensure all images and charts follow the same style (e.g., similar color schemes, font sizes).

Then, optimize for readability. Ensure there is enough space between sections, text, and visuals to avoid a crowded appearance. Ensure high contrast between text and background for easy readability. Use bullet points or numbered lists for clarity, especially for key points in the introduction, methods, and conclusions. Avoid large blocks of text. Keep text to a minimum; focus on concise and impactful statements.

Finally, check for errors. Review for any grammatical or spelling errors. Ensure the content is accurate. Get feedback and ask colleagues to review your poster. They can offer insights on both content and design. View your poster at 100% scale on a large screen to make sure everything is legible. Save your file in a format (e.g. PDF) which prevents elements from moving around when being printed. Thus you can double check if the final print will look as displayed on your computer.

- Title: Use the title from your abstract.
- Introduction: Summarize the problem or question your work addresses. Use short, bulleted sentences.
- Methods: Briefly describe the methods you used for your research. Use short, bulleted sentences.

- Results: Highlight key findings using visual aids like charts, graphs or tables.
- Conclusion: State your conclusions and the broader significance of your work. The discussion should relate to the results.
- References: Include citations, especially if they are key to understanding your work.

TIPPS AND TRICKS

Many people use PowerPoint because it offers templates and is easy to navigate. Your poster should “show” rather than “tell”.

5. How to present the content of the poster during a poster walk

Be ready to explain your poster in 3-5 minutes when presenting at the conference. Be prepared for questions afterwards.

20 sec: Don't repeat the title that was probably mentioned by the poster walk moderator. Start with a hook and grab attention. Begin with a compelling sentence or a relevant question that draws the audience in. For example: "Have you ever wondered how [your research topic] can impact [industry/field]?" Then, introduce the topic by briefly stating the problem or research question your study addresses. For example: "My research investigates [describe your main question or issue]." Give Context and Significance (1 minute)

40 sec: explain the background. Give your audience some context to understand why your research is important. Mention any knowledge gap or current challenge in the field. Describe why your study matters. How does it contribute to the field? Who will benefit from the findings? Example: "Understanding [issue] can lead to better [applications/solutions], particularly in [specific areas]."

40 sec: describe your approach. Highlight the methods or techniques you used in a simple, understandable way. Avoid overly technical details unless necessary. Example: "To study this, we used [research method], gathering data from [sources, participants, experiments]." Mention why this method was the most appropriate for your research question.

40 sec: Present the findings. Focus on the most important and novel results. Use visuals like charts, graphs, or images on your poster to help make your points clear. Example: "As you can see in the graph, we found that [summarize results]. This suggests [implication]." Keep it simple: Focus on the highlights, not the minute details. The goal is to present the essence of your findings.

40 sec: Summarize the main message or conclusion of your research. What should the audience remember? Deliver a key take away message. Example: "These results suggest that [main conclusion], which could change how we think about [field/issue]." Briefly mention any next steps or areas for further research. Example: "In the future, we plan to [next step] to better understand [aspect]." A good transition to the question round would be: "I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have."

TIPPS AND TRICKS

Use the visuals! Point to charts, graphs, or images on your poster to illustrate your points. This will make your explanation more engaging and help the audience grasp complex ideas more easily.

Practice timing! Practice your presentation several times to make sure you stay within the 3-5 min window. Consider practicing in front of friends or colleagues to refine your delivery. You can also record yourself and be your own referee.

Speak with a clear and loud voice, all participants want to hear you. Avoid ambiguities. Stay confident and calm. Keep eye contact with your audience and maintain a friendly, open posture. You're the expert on your poster, so speak confidently.