Designing with PowerPoint

For beginners, I’d recommend that you design large-format posters with PowerPoint, Publisher, or Illustrator. Each of these programs allows you to create shapes and text as vector art, which means they are resizable without loss of quality. PowerPoint and Publisher, while not made for poster printing, should be the first choice for the beginner who has a standard (not overly complex) poster in mind. While Illustrator is more sophisticated and powerful, it has a steeper learning curve for that very reason.

How to Get Started:

Set up your document—

- Open PowerPoint, select a single new slide (use a “blank” slide from the auto-layout).
- Select File/Page Setup and define your
  Width—Maximum for our printer is 42”
  Height—Maximum for PowerPoint is 56”
  We’re going to go with 56”
  Orientation—Choose Landscape
  For Portrait, do just the opposite. Width = 56” and Height = 42”

Remember to do this before you create your poster. Not doing so may result in an unprintable poster (or one that can’t be printed at the size you need).

Insert Text—

Remember that the text on your slide needs a container: Go to “Insert/Text Box”

- Titles—Use large type, mixed upper / lower case (never all capitals), at least 72 points. Subtitles should be at least 36 points.
- Information—Be concise, don’t overwhelm your audience with too much information. A poster is an advertisement for your ideas and work (it’s not a journal article). It should be short and to the point.
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Don’t overcrowd the poster. Allow ‘breathing space’ around the text.

Where to get images: Scan, photo-graph, import digital files (clip art, etc.) or make it yourself in other programs (such as Illustrator or Excel). Avoid web images (Google, Bing, etc.) which generally have low resolution.

If a poster’s size exceeds 50 MB, printing problems may occur.

Leave a 1” border between your poster’s content and the edge of the page.

Do not change the page size after you have finished your poster, Images, text or graphs may move unpredictably.

Recommended font size:
Title 70-85pt.
Authors 55-60pt.
Sub-headings 36-48pt.
Body text 24pt.
Captions 18pt.

be legible and easily apprehended. Make sure there is high contrast between the text and background.

•Body Text— It should be at least 24 points; aligned left, not justified. Choose plain fonts such as Times, Garamond, Caslon (serifs) or Helvetica, Aria or Gill Sans (san serif).

•Columns—Put text (for Scientific Posters) in columns reading top-to-bottom, left to right. Keep column line lengths short (about 50 characters maximum, including spaces). Columns should not vary in width.

Add graphics—

Go to “insert / graphics.” Do not copy/paste (this can introduce errors which may make it unprintable).

•Format— Images, Charts, Graphs should be in jpeg or tiff format. (jpeg is the best choice because of its typically smaller size.)

•Modify—You may find it best to modify images in another program such as Photoshop or Fireworks.

•Resolution—A 5” x 7” image at 180 dpi is adequate for most poster figures.

•Importing—Images from scientific graphing programs (Sigma Plot, Prism etc.) and Mac pict files might look great on your screen but can print incorrectly. Such files should be converted to jpeg or tiff. You can create many graphic elements (lines, arrows, boxes, etc) within PowerPoint.

•Backgrounds— Avoid dark solid colors for your background. Too much ink will make your poster wavy, and dark colors will display unattractive horizontal lines. Avoid using PowerPoint “patterns” or “template backgrounds.” These typically do not print well. Note that printed colors may not match what you saw on the screen.