

The background features a light gray geometric pattern of overlapping triangles. In the center, two dark gray silhouettes of human heads in profile face each other. Between them are two overlapping speech bubbles, one light green and one light blue, both with a darker shade at the bottom. The text is centered over this graphic.

Poster creation workshop

PSYC 11: Laboratory in Psychological Science

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Today's plan

Workshop schedule (50 minutes)

- **15 min:** Poster design principles and best practices
- **5 min:** Common mistakes to avoid
- **30 min:** Hands-on activity -- sketch your poster layout with your group

Anatomy of a scientific poster

Standard poster sections

- **Title bar:** Title, authors, affiliations, contact info
- **Abstract:** Brief summary of the work (some posters omit this)
- **Introduction:** Motivation and research question
- **Methods:** How you studied the question
- **Results:** Figures and key findings
- **Discussion:** Interpretation and future directions
- **References & Acknowledgments:** Citations and funding/thanks

Typical layout: 3--4 columns, read left-to-right and top-to-bottom. The viewer's eye should flow naturally through your narrative.

Visual design principles

Less text, more figures

- Your poster is a **visual aid**, not a paper on a wall
- Use **visual hierarchy** to guide the reader's eye
- Recommended font sizes:
 - Title: **72pt+**
 - Section headers: **36pt+**
 - Body text: **24pt+**
- **White space matters** -- it makes your poster feel clean and approachable
- Limit each section to 3--5 bullet points or short sentences

Your poster should be **understandable from the figures alone.**

- Each figure needs a **self-contained caption** -- a reader should understand what the figure shows without reading the surrounding text
- Choose figures that tell the **story** of your project
- Label all axes, include legends, and use clear titles
- Think about color choices: accessible, high-contrast, meaningful

Discussion: *If someone walks by your poster and only looks at the figures, what would they learn? Would*

Common poster mistakes

Mistakes to avoid

- **Too much text** -- if your poster looks like a paper, you have too much text
- **Tiny fonts** -- if you can't read it from 4 feet away, it's too small
- **No visual hierarchy** -- everything looks the same importance
- **Figures without labels or captions** -- unlabeled axes, missing legends
- **Wall of numbers** -- tables of raw statistics without interpretation
- **Cluttered layout** -- no white space, sections crammed together

What makes a poster effective?

Good vs. bad posters

- **Effective poster:** Clear, concise title that states the finding. One or two prominent figures that tell the story. Minimal text organized in logical sections. Readable from 4 feet away. Logical left-to-right, top-to-bottom flow.
- **Ineffective poster:** Vague title. Walls of text copied from a paper. Tiny, cluttered figures. No clear visual flow. Reader doesn't know where to look first.

Rule of thumb: A good poster can be understood in under 5 minutes. A great poster draws people in from across the room.

The "elevator pitch" test

Can you explain your poster in 2 minutes?

- Imagine someone stops at your poster and says, *"So, what's this about?"*
- You should be able to explain:
 1. **What question** you studied
 2. **How** you studied it (one sentence)
 3. **What you found** (the key result)
 4. **Why it matters**
- Practice this with your group **right now** -- take turns!

Hands-on activity: sketch your poster

You have 30 minutes -- go!

- Work with your group to **sketch your poster layout on paper**
- Your sketch should address:
 - **(a)** Which figures will you include? What do they show?
 - **(b)** What are your section headings?
 - **(c)** What is the visual flow? Where does the reader's eye go first, second, third?
 - **(d)** What text is **essential** vs. **cuttable**?
- TAs and the instructor will circulate to give feedback
- Don't worry about making it pretty -- focus on **structure and content**

Wrapping up

- **Before next class:** Refine your poster sketch based on today's feedback
- **Questions?** Ask your TA, or reach out:
 - Email: jeremy.r.manning@dartmouth.edu
 - Office hours: See Canvas for schedule and location