POSTER PRESENTATIONS

FOR

RESEARCH METHODS IN PSYCHOLOGY

Dr. Michael Kitchens

OVERVIEW:

Poster presentations are a common way to present research. Local, regional, and national conferences often have poster sessions. In these sessions, many posters will be in a room together. Attendees at the conference will walk around to look at the posters. Some people at the conference will look at the titles of the posters to find what is interesting to them or in their area of research interests. Others look at the conference book to find posters on research topics they find interesting or on their area of research. In both cases, the people that the presenter will talk to are people that are interested in this work.

The presenter's job is to provide a quick (~5-10 minutes) summary of **(a)** the empirical rationale for the study, **(b)** the research question, **(c)** the procedure, **(d)** the results, and **(e)** the conclusion drawn from the results. Necessarily, a short summary of the work does not allow you to describe all the details. The summary is really a way to begin the discussion. It is typical and probable that the people you describe your research to will ask you follow-up questions about your materials, procedure, literature review, or they may challenge your conclusion and ask you to consider how it fits in with other research. As such, the presentation of your research is rather straightforward, but you should be prepared for a presentation by knowing your past research, your procedure, the reason or justification for your operational definitions, the basis of your conclusion, etc.

As for the poster, there is no formal APA-Style for posters, but there are often a number of guidelines that you must follow for each individual conference, such as the size of the poster, the content, etc. (this is noted by Szuchman, 2011, p. 139[1]). The purpose of this document is to provide some guidelines that you are required to use for this class, but I hope will serve as general rules-of-thumb that will translate into other classes and research conferences. This document will ***not*** be a step-by-step "how-to" in developing posters. For an excellent resource in the mechanics of poster development, see Dr. Lou Manza's handout that he developed for his statistics course. Be aware, however, that some of the content that is required by Dr. Manza is different from this course. His focus in statistics is presenting data, specifically. Thus, there are a number of figures and tables he requires. The purpose of the poster presentation in my *RESEARCH METHODS IN PSYCHOLOGY* course is to give broad and general practice at discussing research and developing posters that will look a little more like what you will use at a research conference.

[1] Szuchman, L. T. (2011). *Writing with style: APA style made easy (5th edition)*. Wadsworth Publishing: Belmont, CA.

POSTER CONTENT:

It is important to consider your poster as a visual tool. It will, therefore, be succinct in that it may leave out some of the details. Your 5-10 minute talk will be the 'meat' of the poster presentation with the poster serving as a visual aid. One of the things that means is that your poster should be visually appealing. The other thing this means that ***the content will be parsimonious, but someone should be able to read your paper on its own***. That is to say, it may leave out some of the "dirty details," but someone should be able to understand your rationale, your research question, your procedure, results, and conclusion when reading the poster.

Title:

- **The title** of your poster can be less formal than the title of your research paper, but the title should describe the content of your work. Remember that you attract attention to your poster at a research conference through common research interests, so your title should indicate what your research area is.
- Along with the title, you should **list the authors**. Typically, the first author is the presenter at a research conference, and subsequent authors are contributors to the project (in order of contributions). In our class poster presentation, you may list authors by alphabetical order, a flip of the coin, height, or whatever, but you must list the full names (first and last) of the contributors/presenters.

Introduction:

- The introduction should lead the reader to the "hole" in the research and end with the research question or purpose of the paper.
- It may be that you specifically cite research that leads to the research question, but for the purpose of the class, it is not necessary that you cite work. However, if you cite work, you should be sure to include references in the poster.
- Obviously, you will not describe the details of the research, but succinctly provides the major points that lead to the research question.
- Lenore Szuchman (2011, pp. 140-141[1]) provides three ways that the introduction could be presented:

1. *"Discuss the first study to address your topic in its current form. Then describe a very relevant recent one, especially if you are replicating and extending it. There might be more than on very similar to yours; mention several of the most similar.[2]"*

In this scenario, you are using one (or maybe two) research studies that have a similar methodology. As noted, this should be used if you are replicating and extending the findings. This is particularly useful if you use a methodology similar to the described research. To do this properly, begin with citing and describing the purpose of the research study you are replicating/extending. Then, briefly describe the methodology of the study. Finally, state how you are extending that question. In a case like this, you would want to cite and reference the research study you are using as the basis.

[2] Szuchman, 2011, p. 140

Example:

Rogers, Kuiper, and Kirker (1977) investigated the effect of relating concepts to the self on memory. In their study, participants were presented with a list of words. For each word, participants thought about how the word describes themselves or thought about some other characteristic of the word unrelated to the self. The results showed that participants who related the words to themselves recalled more words than participants who thought about another characteristic of the words.

The purpose of the present study was to extend these findings by examining whether participants were able to remember more positive words that they relate to their selves than negative words that they relate to their selves.

2. *"Discuss the competing theoretical positions surrounding your work. Then describe the study that most closely resembles your method."*[3]

In this scenario, the focus is on theoretical concepts. To do this, you will need to briefly describe the theories, and in particular, the point(s) at which they make competing predictions should be identified. Each theory can be illustrated or expounded upon with a methodology or an example that foreshadows the study you conducted. In this case, you would want to cite and reference the primary research papers that supports these competing theories.

Example:

- Decision Affect Theory (DAT; Mellers, Schwartz, Ho, & Ritov, 1997) asserts that people's feelings about events depend on the alternative outcome. For example, DAT would predict that students would be happier with a C on an exam if they expected to get an F on the exam than if they expected to get an A on the exam.

- Consistency theory (Carlsmith & Aronson, 1963) asserts that people's feelings about events depend on the consistency between expectations and outcomes. For example, consistency theory would predict that students would be happier with a C on an exam if they expected to get a C on the exam than if they expected to get a grade other than a C on the exam.

- The purpose of this study was to examine which prediction is correct.

3. *"Provide a general explanation without references about how this problem has been addressed traditionally in research. Then explain, with references if appropriate, how you will diverge from this tradition and why."*[4]

This is a good method to use if you are changing the methodology or extending some findings of past work. In this case, you are showing how the research has failed to address some particular problem or has failed to address the problem in a way that you believe is important. You may or may not cite and reference research articles with this method.

[3] Szuchman, 2011, p. 140
[4] Szuchman, 2011, p. 141

Example:

Researchers have typically relied on participants' self-report to study helping. For example, previous studies have examined whether mood influences helping in which participants listen to either sad or happy music and then report their willingness to help in some unrelated task. The problem with this methodology is that it is not clear whether their willingness translates into actual behavior. The purpose of this study was to examine whether mood influences helping behavior, rather than the willingness to help.

These are not exhaustive methods for writing an introduction, but they should be useful in giving you an idea about how to succinctly and completely develop your research question in posters.

Method:

- The method section of your poster should be complete, but will certainly not contain all the details contained in an APA-style paper.
- Your **participant information** will be much shorter, unless it is necessary that you report this. For example, if your study is on gender differences, you would need to report the number of males and females. Typically, the participant information will be confined to parenthetical material.
- The **materials** need only be described if they are particularly complex or novel to your study. For example, if you are reporting on a study that validates a scale, you need to report the other scales included in your study, or if you were doing facial expression research, you need to display (and refer to) some example stimuli on your poster.
- The **procedure** will be the primary text (typically, anyway) in the method section. You will need to describe the main actions of the participants. You will need to carefully describe what participants did including the IVs and DVs.

Example:

Participants (*N* = 135, 45 males, 67% Caucasian, 25% African American) who volunteered to participate in the study listened to music intended to elicit either a happy or sad mood. To further manipulate mood, participants wrote for 5-mins about how the song made them feel. After completing mood manipulation check questions, participants individually viewed 35 randomly presented neutral and emotionally expressive faces on a computer screen for 1.5 seconds each. For each face, participants rated their impression of the valence of the expression on a scale from 1 (*negative*) to 10 (*positive*) and the arousal of the expression on a scale from 1(*low activation*) to 10 (*high activation*).

Results:

- The results section should only report the main findings as succinctly as possible. The primary objective of the results section of the poster is to point to the most important findings and the inferential statistics.
- The results section should include any relevant "data crunching" procedures, manipulation check information, and the primary analyses.

Example:

To assess whether music changed participants' mood, an independent measures *t*-test was conducted on participants' average mood ratings, showing that participants who listened and wrote about the happy music reported being in a more positive mood than participants who listened and wrote about the sad music, $t(134) = 5.98$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 1).

To assess whether mood influenced the judgment of facial expressions, separate independent measures *t*-tests were performed on participant's valence and arousal ratings. The results showed that participants in the happy music condition ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 0.46$) rated the facial expressions as more positive than participants in the sad music condition ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.59$), $t(135) = 4.56$, $p = .035$. The results also showed that participants in the happy music condition ($M = 7.31$, $SD = 1.04$) rated the facial expressions as more aroused than participants in the sad music condition ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.22$), $t(135) = 8.67$, $p = .010$.

Conclusion:

- The conclusion is different than a discussion section in the paper. It should not describe how the result fit into past work in detail, the strengths and limitations, or future directions. The conclusion should be a short statement about the main findings in relation to the research question—the conclusion you drew from the data. A conclusion is most effective when it lines up with the introduction section. For example, if you are addressing conflicting predictions between two theories, your introduction should outline this (see example #2 under ***introduction*** in this document) and your conclusion should identify how the results support one and contradict the other theory.

Example:

These data suggests that, if facial expressions convey any information at all about one's feeling state, it is influenced by the mood of the perceiver. Thus, if facial expressions send a universal message, it undergoes the same translations that other messages do. They are interpreted by the audience.

POSTER LAYOUT:

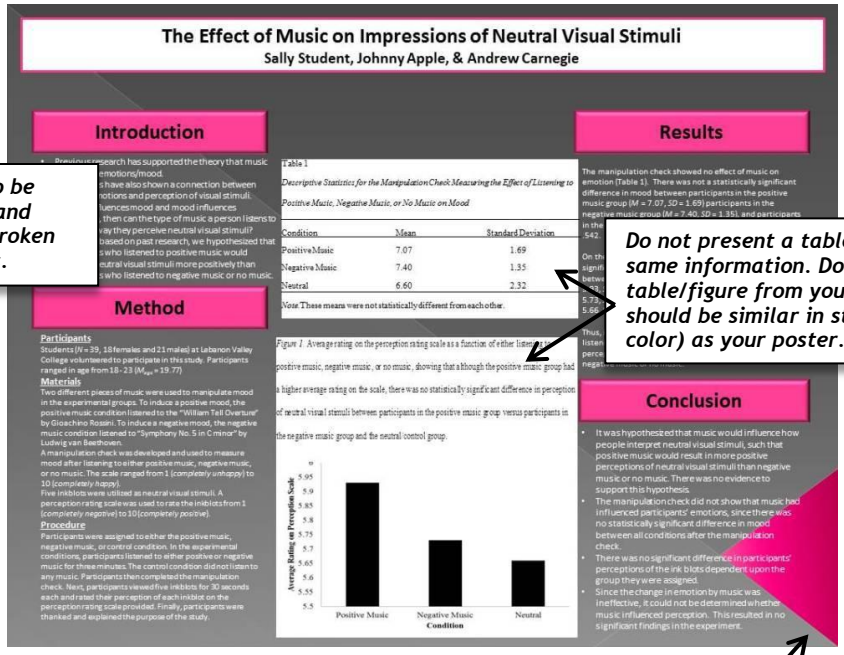
As noted earlier in this document, one of the vital pieces of an effective poster presentation is the visual layout of the poster. Because there is no official APA standard for style in the poster, there are a number of ways that the poster can be laid out. This means you can choose the size and style of your font, the color, and organization of the poster. While you have a good deal of license, then, it is still important to consider some general guidelines that will make your poster aesthetically and organizationally effective. When considering the layout of your poster, you must think about both aspects.

In terms of aesthetics, the color and font should be consistent throughout. The color and font (style and size) should facilitate the readability of your poster. The sizes of your boxes (if you use those to designate the sections of your content) should be of a similar in size and same in color and font.

In terms of organization, the sections should be organized in a way that facilitates the readability. You should move, naturally across (or up/down) the poster from introduction to conclusion. The most prominent feature of your poster should be the visual elements, such as example stimuli, a diagram of your procedure, or a figure or table.

Overall, the poster should be a visual tool that could be read on its own, but serves as an aid to present your research study.

Here are a few examples, illustrating some **DO NOTS**[5]:

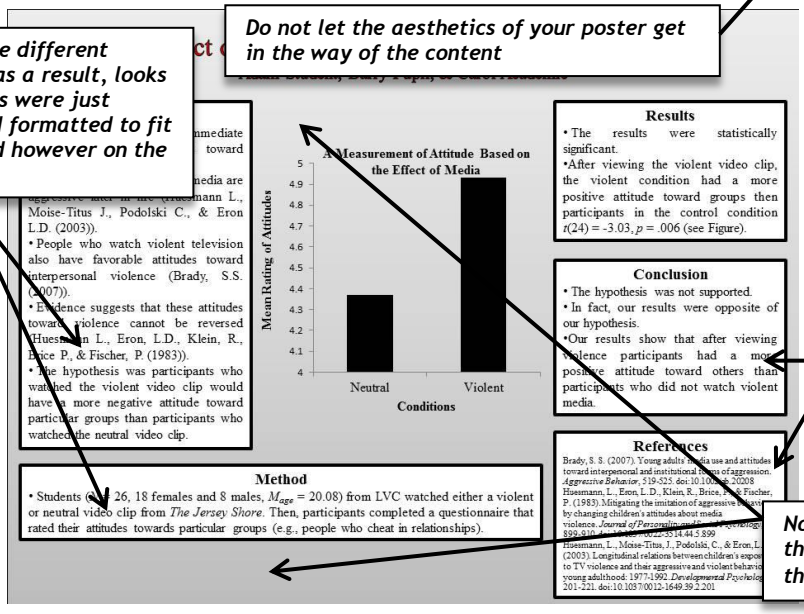


The material needs to be presented concisely, and does not need to be broken up into these sections.

Do not present a table and figure of the same information. Do not copy-&-paste the table/figure from your paper document. It should be similar in style (e.g., font and color) as your poster.

Do not let the aesthetics of your poster get in the way of the content

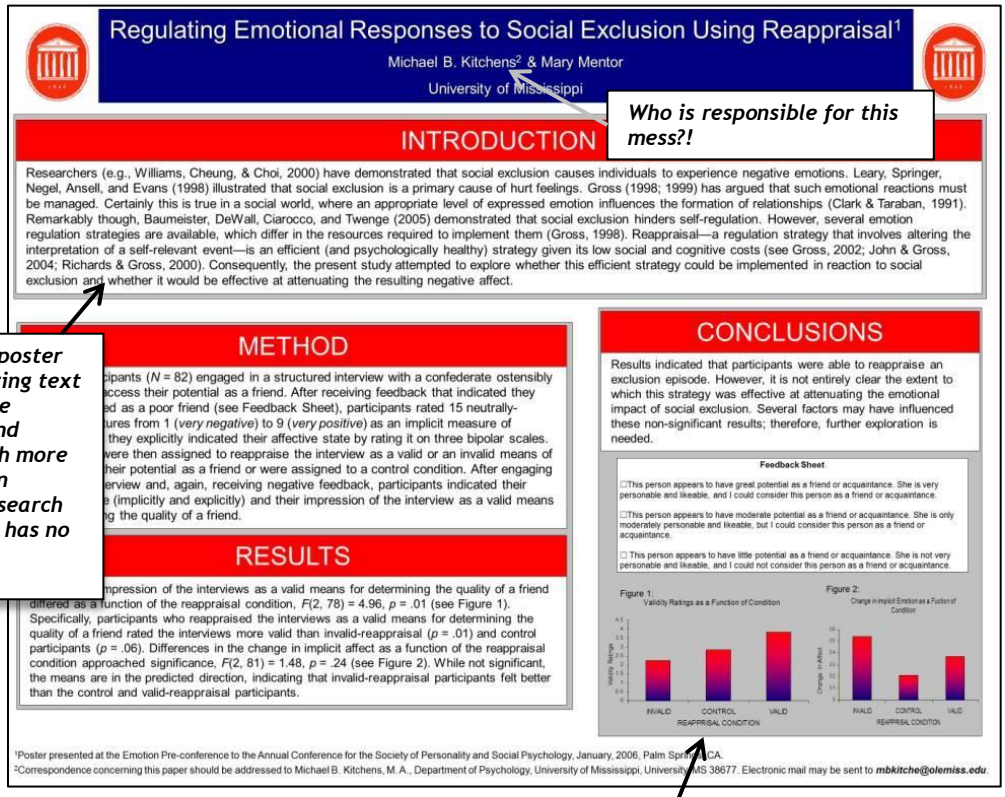
The boxes are different shapes, and as a result, looks like the boxes were just arranged and formatted to fit wherever and however on the poster



The spacing between words and font sizes are different.

Notice the empty spaces that are present because of the arrangement

[5] Some of these are posters I have made, and some of these are slightly modified posters that students have made. This is not to say that all aspects of these posters are poor, but certain elements of them are done less well than they should.



Regulating Emotional Responses to Social Exclusion Using Reappraisal[1]

Michael B. Kitchens[2] & Mary Mentor

University of Mississippi

INTRODUCTION

Researchers (e.g., Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000) have demonstrated that social exclusion causes individuals to experience negative emotions. Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, and Evans (1998) illustrated that social exclusion is a primary cause of hurt feelings. Gross (1998; 1999) has argued that such emotional reactions must be managed. Certainly this is true in a social world, where an appropriate level of expressed emotion influences the formation of relationships (Clark & Taraban, 1991). Remarkably though, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Twenge (2005) demonstrated that social exclusion hinders self-regulation. However, several emotion regulation strategies are available, which differ in the resources required to implement them (Gross, 1998). Reappraisal—a regulation strategy that involves altering the interpretation of a self-relevant event—is an efficient (and psychologically healthy) strategy given its low social and cognitive costs (see Gross, 2002; John & Gross, 2004; Richards & Gross, 2000). Consequently, the present study attempted to explore whether this efficient strategy could be implemented in reaction to social exclusion and whether it would be effective at attenuating the resulting negative affect.

METHOD

cipants (*N* = 82) engaged in a structured interview with a confederate ostensibly access their potential as a friend. After receiving feedback that indicated they ed as a poor friend (see Feedback Sheet), participants rated 15 neutrally- ures from 1 (*very negative*) to 9 (*very positive*) as an implicit measure of they explicitly indicated their affective state by rating it on three bipolar scales. were then assigned to reappraise the interview as a valid or an invalid means of heir potential as a friend or were assigned to a control condition. After engaging erview and, again, receiving negative feedback, participants indicated their e (implicitly and explicitly) and their impression of the interview as a valid means g the quality of a friend.

RESULTS

mpression of the interviews as a valid means for determining the quality of a friend differed as a function of the reappraisal condition, $F(2, 78) = 4.96$, $p = .01$ (see Figure 1). Specifically, participants who reappraised the interviews as a valid means for determining the quality of a friend rated the interviews more valid than invalid-reappraisal ($p = .01$) and control participants ($p = .06$). Differences in the change in implicit affect as a function of the reappraisal condition approached significance, $F(2, 81) = 1.48$, $p = .24$ (see Figure 2). While not significant, the means are in the predicted direction, indicating that invalid-reappraisal participants felt better than the control and valid-reappraisal participants.

CONCLUSIONS

Results indicated that participants were able to reappraise an exclusion episode. However, it is not entirely clear the extent to which this strategy was effective at attenuating the emotional impact of social exclusion. Several factors may have influenced these non-significant results; therefore, further exploration is needed.

Feedback Sheet

☐This person appears to have great potential as a friend or acquaintance. She is very personable and likeable, and I could consider this person as a friend or acquaintance.

☐This person appears to have moderate potential as a friend or acquaintance. She is only moderately personable and likeable, but I could consider this person as a friend or acquaintance.

☐ This person appears to have little potential as a friend or acquaintance. She is not very personable and likeable, and I could not consider this person as a friend or acquaintance.

Figure 1: Validity Ratings as a Function of Condition

Figure 2: Change in Implicit Emotion as a Function of Condition

INVALID CONTROL VALID

REAPPRISAL CONDITION

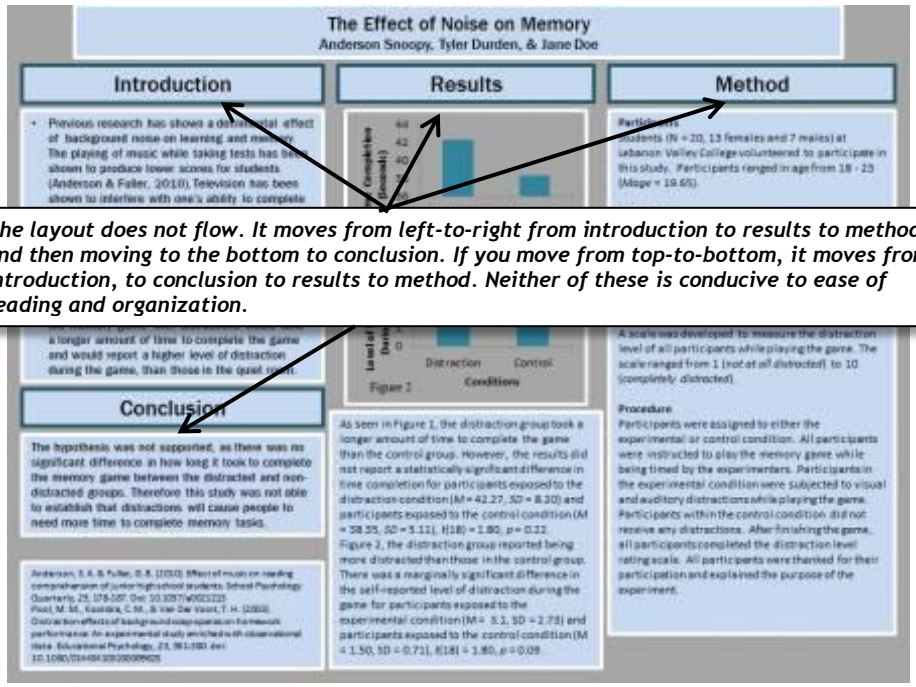
[1]Poster presented at the Emotion Pre-conference to the Annual Conference for the Society of Personality and Social Psychology, January, 2006, Palm Spr CA.

[2]Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Michael B. Kitchens, M. A., Department of Psychology, University of Mississippi, University MS 38677. Electronic mail may be sent to **mbkitche@olemiss.edu**.

Who is responsible for this mess?!

Most of the poster is full of boring text that could be explained and written much more succinctly. In addition, research is cited, but has no references.

The primary feature of a poster should be the visual elements (e.g., example stimuli or your figure), but this poster relegates the visual elements to a small set of figures in the corner with hard to read labels.



The Effect of Noise on Memory

Anderson Snoopy, Tyler Dunden, & Jane Doe

Introduction

Results

Method

Conclusion

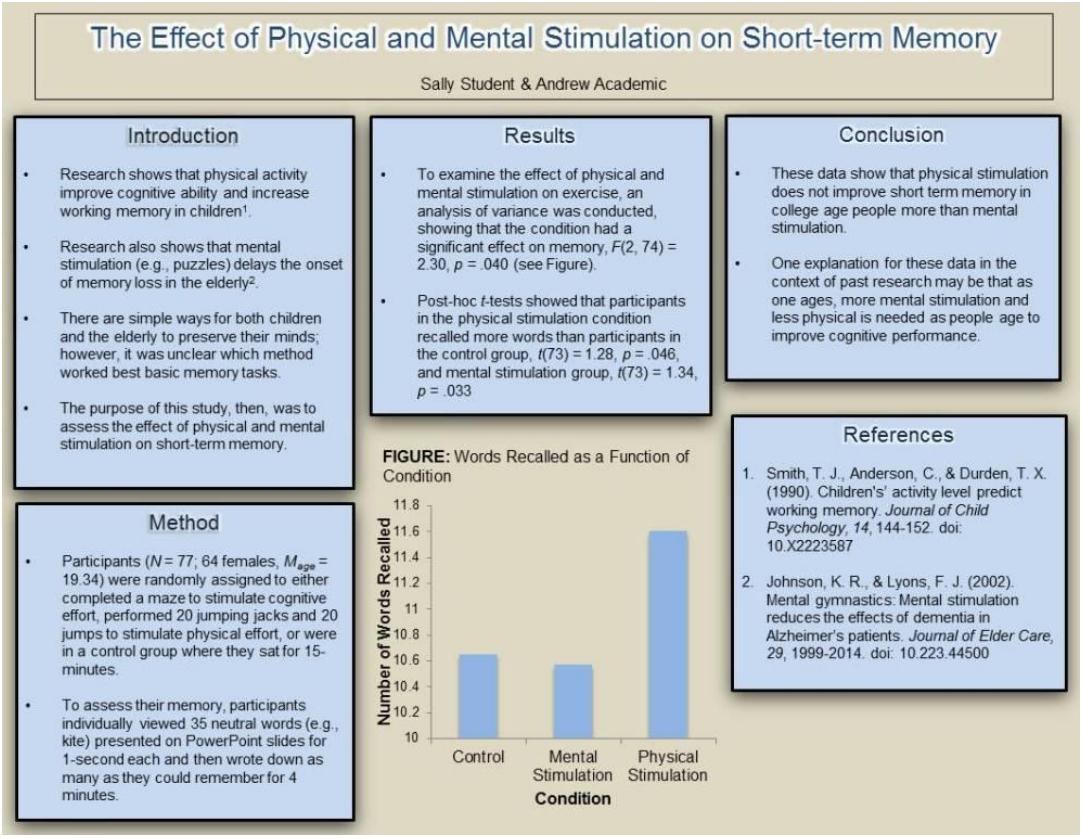
Distraction Control

Conditions

Figure 2

The layout does not flow. It moves from left-to-right from introduction to results to method, and then moving to the bottom to conclusion. If you move from top-to-bottom, it moves from introduction, to conclusion to results to method. Neither of these is conducive to ease of reading and organization.

Here are a few examples of posters, illustrating some **DOs**[6]:



Organizational/Visual Elements:

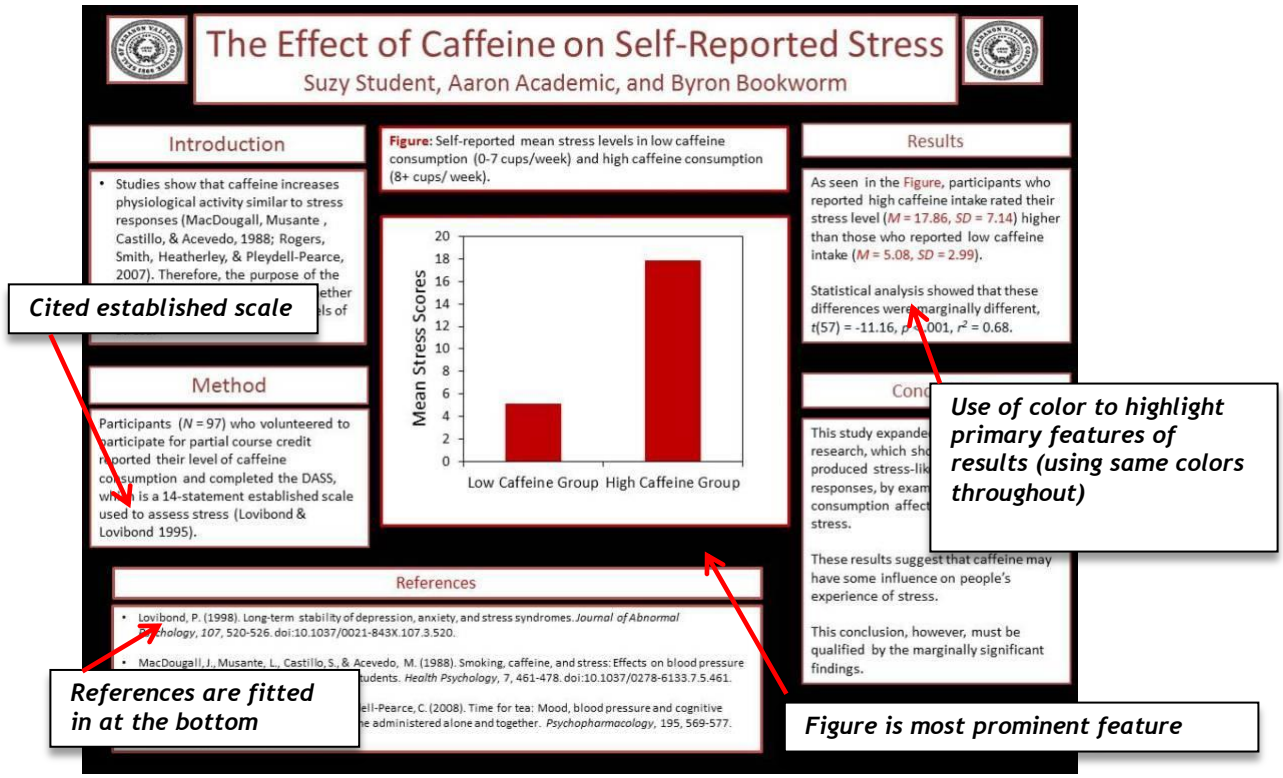
- The poster flows up-and-down and left-to-right.
- The color scheme, font style, and sizes are consistent throughout and proportional to each other.
- The primary feature is the figure.
- Bullet points sometimes help present the concise content in a poster.
- Notice that the citations in the poster are done with numbers that correspond to the references.

Content Elements:

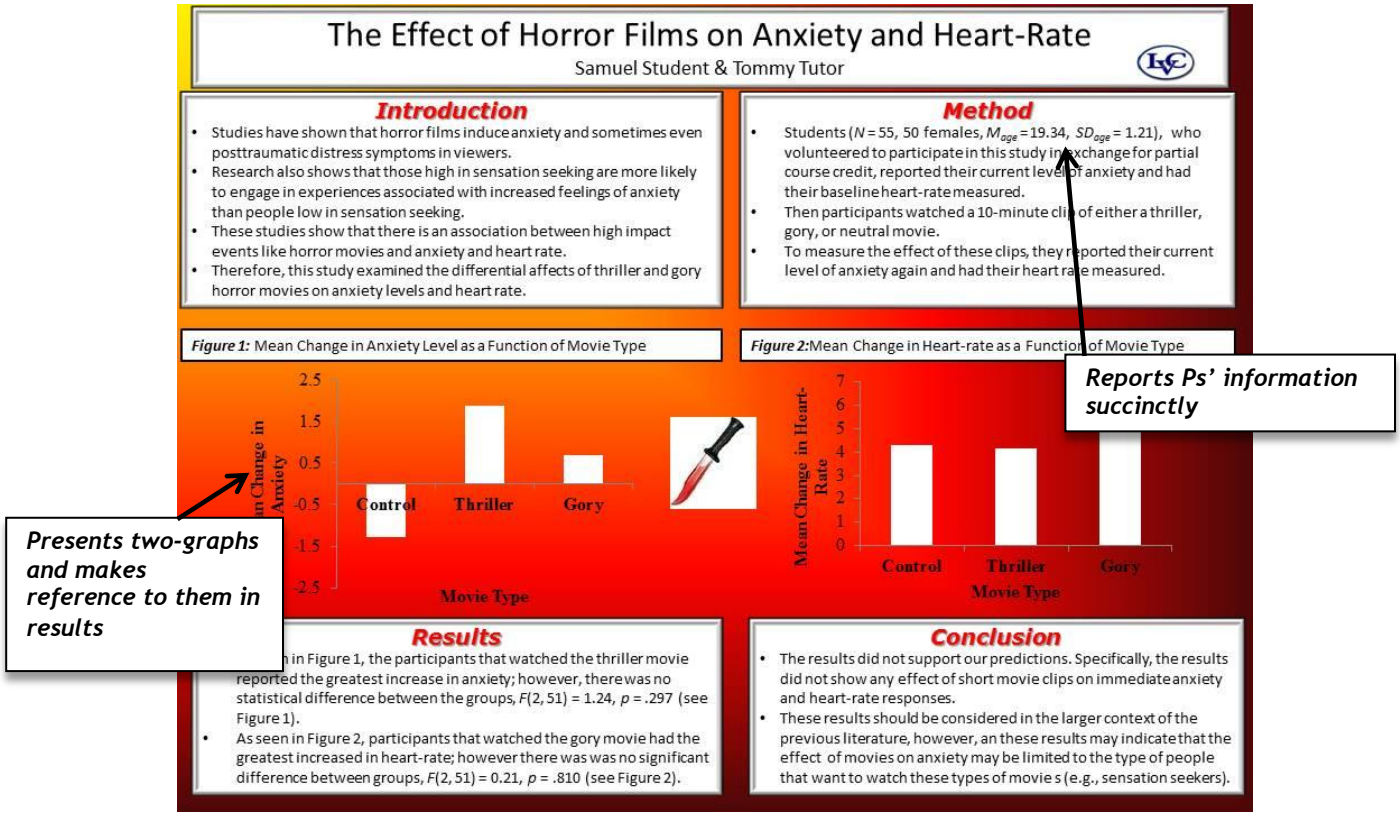
- The introduction makes a simple, yet logical rationale for the research question.
- The method gives the necessary information about the procedure without getting bogged down into details
- The results describe the type of analyses, the pattern of the data, and the inferential statistics in two clear sentences.
- The conclusion answers the research question and briefly addresses the implications (or big picture) conclusions that could be drawn from the findings.

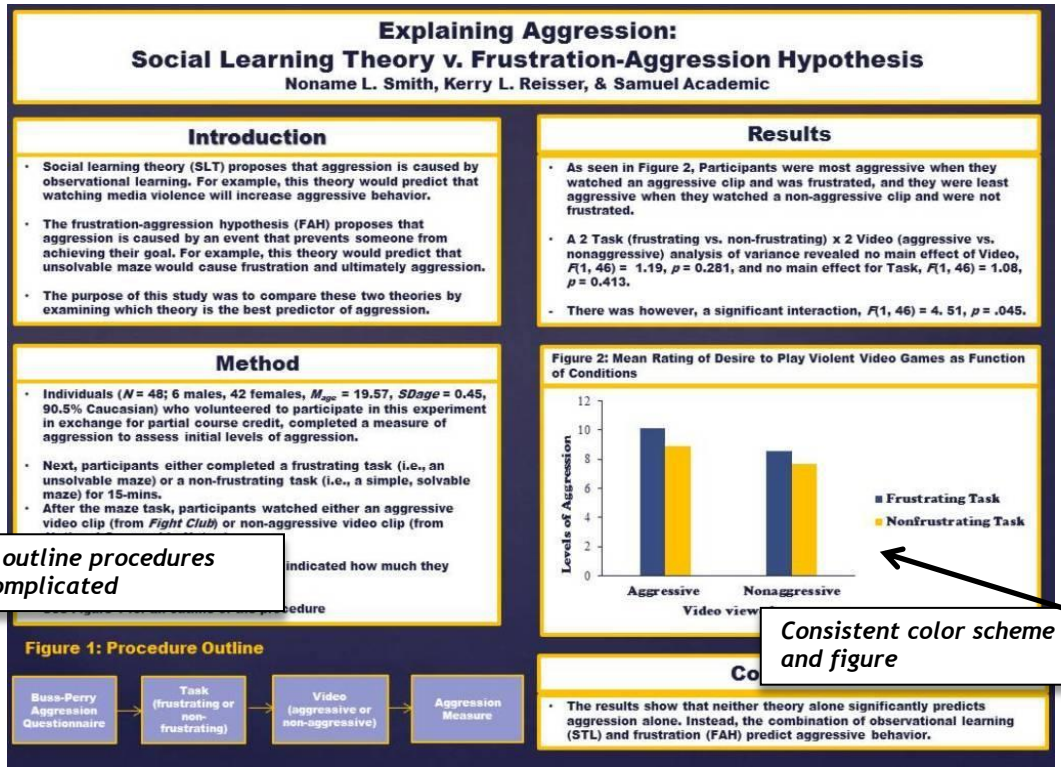
Overall, there are a number of different styles/layouts. Some are presented below.

[6] These are modified posters that students have made. This is not to say that all aspects of these posters are perfect, but certain elements of them are done well.



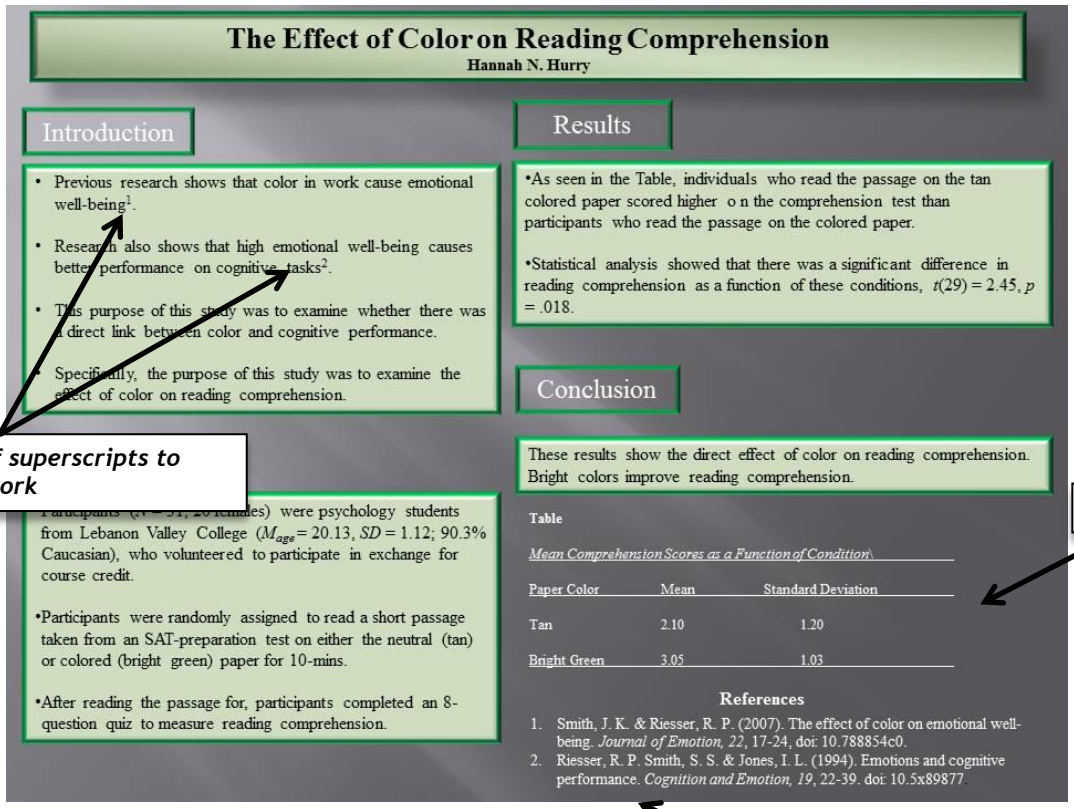
Two-Column Examples:





A good way to outline procedures that may be complicated

Consistent color scheme with poster and figure



Use of superscripts to cite work

Use of table

References are numbered to correspond to citations in introduction