

GY 302: Mineralogy and Crystallography

Lab Assignment 5: Poster Preparation

Advise and Guidelines

Introduction: The major assignment for GY 302 will be a “term” poster display. A poster can be considered a cut and paste version of a scientific paper, but it must be more concise, succinct and visually appealing. In particular, you have to be very selective with the text. There must still be an abstract, an introduction (where you clearly state the purpose of your poster), a discussion section, conclusions and reference citations. To make your life (and Dr. Haywick’s marking) easier, you will all follow the same format. Very soon, you will all receive a template in PowerPoint 2003 format. Insert the text that you want to in each of the preformatted text boxes that have been positioned on the poster template. Make sure that you follow the rules (see attached page).

Key points: Images are more important for a poster than they are for a paper. Make sure that the ones that you use are high quality. If they are “small” files (e.g., less than 250 KB), they will not enlarge well on your poster. If your image is pixilated, choose another one. Poor quality images will count against you.

Do not try to convert the equivalent of a 10 page paper into a poster. In particular, do not try to fit all of the text that you think is necessary into the information boxes. Figures really are more important than text for posters so you may have to cut out some of the necessary material. Again, use the poster guideline to help you with composition. Your text should be readable by people standing 4 feet away from your poster so. Use the fonts I selected for you (32 pt higher title font; 24 pt text font). Figure captions and references can afford to be a smaller font (e.g., 18pt).

Do not wait until the last minute to do your poster. The first thing you need to do is select a mineral. That is what this assignment is all about.

Your posters will be presented in a GSA-style poster session format during the week 15 lab session. Be prepared to stand in front of your poster from 1:00 pm until the end of the lab. The posters will also be on display at the Mobile Rocks and Gems Society annual show held at the Gulf State Show Grounds on the Thanksgiving Holiday.

Due Date (for selecting a mineral): See the calendar or website for due dates.

Your poster *must* follow the format indicated on the next page

----- cut here -----

My Name is: _____

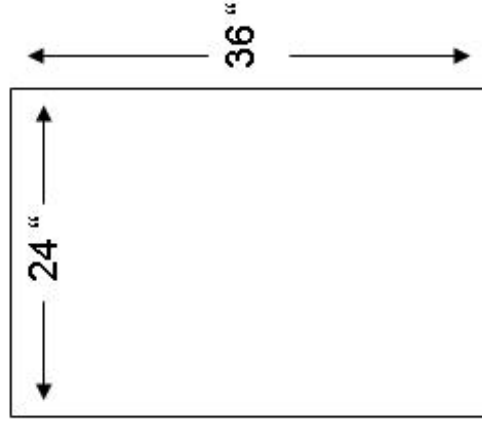
The mineral I will be featuring on a poster is: _____

----- cut here -----

GY 302 Poster Guidelines

- Posters will measure 24" by 36" (portrait orientation)
- All posters will follow the same PowerPoint format and color scheme (don't monkey with it or rise an assessment penalty)
- Use only the template that I provide you with
- Print them out using the plotter in room 136 (you will be shown how to do this)

- This exercise is not redo-able



STUDENT NEWS AND VIEWS

Brian Exton, University of Texas at Austin

Student News and Views provides GSA membership with commentary on matters relating to undergraduate and graduate students in the geosciences. The Correspondent for Student News and Views welcomes comments and suggestions, sent to sumatt@geosociety.org.

Effective Posters: The Five-Minute Tour

The time is drawing near for geologists of all types to descend on Toronto for the 1998 GSA Annual Meeting, and many of you may be presenting posters for the first time. I thought of submitting this particular column for the September issue, but the earlier you begin planning your poster, the better your results (and feedback) are likely to be. The idea of a column on helpful hints for designing posters is also fresh in my mind because I just presented one of my own posters at a GSA Penrose Conference. In preparing for that meeting, I discovered how few articles there were on this topic, and how widely the suggestions varied. Some of you have given posters before, and probably consider yourselves experts by now. We may learn from our mistakes, but we can always improve. Although this topic may be of interest primarily to the novice poster presenter, a broader audience may benefit as well by heeding some of these suggestions.

Spatial Circumstances

The content of your poster will largely be determined by the amount of space you are given. For most meetings, this is 4' by 8', and you should use as much of it as possible without overcrowding. Your first inclination might be to fill half of this space with text and half with graphics. A better approach would be to limit your text to about one-fourth of the space and maximize the impact of your graphics. Remember that a poster session is more than just abstracts and authors—it is a graphically oriented method for increasing active discussion of research.

Step One: Picture This

As your first step, make a list of the photographs, figures, and data tables you would need if you were to create a poster describing your research using graphics only. This may seem difficult or impossible to do, but it will force you to focus on the essential elements of your work. The bulk of your time will then be spent collecting or creating these images. Be sure to write simple captions for each and every graphic.

Step Two: Divide and Conquer

Think of your poster as an argument to convince others that what you have

In many ways, presenting a poster is much harder than giving a talk. Over the course of the session, you will probably talk much more than 20 minutes and will have to answer many more questions than the few allowed after a talk. Make it obvious that you are the author and not just another viewer. Actively engage each person who approaches your poster.

Rehearse a brief summary of your research that you can present to those in a hurry. And finally, don't be afraid to highlight areas that are not totally worked out, since this is where you might get the most benefit from feedback. It's better to have several people standing next to your poster discussing ways to improve the study than to be standing all alone.

Posters can be as individual as their presenters. After all, no one else has the same perspective of your research or understands the particular question that you are asking. This diversity of style may also reflect personal preference in regard to graphic design. On the other hand, poster sessions, as informal as they seem, are probably the method by which an overwhelming proportion of technical information is passed during meetings, so the way in which they are designed deserves more than a passing glance. In this case, five minutes may just be enough! ■

done is important (you will certainly encounter others who agree or disagree about your methods or results). Although there's no substitute for knowing your subject matter, being well organized can help you survive the critical eye. Lead the viewer step by step through your research by dividing the poster into discrete elements. Traditional wisdom holds that at a minimum, you should include title, abstract, introduction, methodology, results, and conclusions. Depending on the stage of your research, however, you may also want to include sections on future research plans, questions for discussion, etc. Be sure to leave white space between sections, so that each stands alone. Text size is also very critical. It must be large enough to be read at a distance, because if you attract a crowd, it may be difficult to get close to your poster. Generally this means a font size greater than 100 points for your title, and greater than 18 points for the body of your poster's text.

Step Three: Some Assembly Required

There are several approaches to assembling your final poster. Perhaps the most common is to wait until the meeting, and then pin your text and graphics blocks to the bulletin board provided for you. For a more polished look, you may want to assemble the poster at home on pre-cut matte board, available from most art supply stores and framing galleries. But the days of scissors and spray adhesive are coming to an end. At the conference I attended recently, perhaps one-third of all posters were printed as single sheets using high-quality color plotters. Popular programs for creating your poster this way include Microsoft PowerPoint and Adobe Illustrator. Before you attempt the electronic method you should become familiar with the software. Depending on which you choose, the learning curve can have a steep initial slope. More important is to know the capabilities of your computer system, because large graphics files embedded in your poster will mean a very large file size, often several megabytes. Be sure your computer is connected directly to the final printer—otherwise you will have to FTP the file to one that is connected or carry the file on a Zip disk or other high-density diskette.