

# PREPARATION GUIDELINES FOR POSTER SESSIONS

## TYPE AND TEXT

When you first plan out your poster display, you will need to consider how much text is going to appear in the display. It's very useful to have text read clearly from 5 feet away. Using upper and lower case is preferable to using upper case only. The shapes of words are more readily recognized in lower case. A simple block type, bolded, like this:

### Having Fun at TESOL

generally reads very well, although a simple serif font like this:

### Having Fun at TESOL

works as well. The best type sizes for titles on the board is between 2 and 3 inches high (around 200-255 point). The size of additional text needs to be at least 24 point so that it can be read from several feet away.

(24) Just hang  
around in the lobby  
and wait.

Remember, however, that the amount of text should still be limited. (If you feel stymied by the text constraint, you can always put together an epic handout...)

As for the actual lettering of the titles and text, you can use whatever medium is available to you: computer generated type; felt pens; cut-out, stencil or rub-on letters; are all effective. If you decide to hand-letter the titles and text, you can always "rough" the text in pencil first and then "ink" over the pencil guides.

## THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The following hints may be helpful in creating effective illustrations:

- Use photos or other artwork that are **large enough to be seen** without standing right next to the board.
- Keep all illustrations **simple and bold**.
- Use realia if it can be **attached securely** to the board.
- Try to make all charts and tables into **bold graphic display** where text is minimized and **symbols are maximized**.

## ASSEMBLY BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

The cork board on which you will be mounting your poster display does not make an attractive backing. 8\_x11 sheets (of a neutral color or one that complements the colors in your display) can be overlapped onto the 4x8 board. Solid color wrapping paper also works well for this purpose.

Adhere all the elements from each section of the display onto their own poster boards so that they lie flat. Leaving an inch to a half an inch edge of poster board around the elements frames them nicely. When choosing your poster board, take the more colorful elements of your display with you so that you can avoid choosing a color that will distract the viewer.

For traveling purposes, be sure that your display breaks down into elements that can be carried easily. It's a good idea to be able to carry your display onto the plane in order to avoid the lost luggage syndrome. Check with your airline for carry-on specifications (usually 17"x22").

Lay out your entire display at home and mark corners on the backing material where you will be attaching the elements of your display. Number these corners to correspond to numbers on the backs of the elements and you will be able to reassemble the display quickly.

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## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

There are no absolutes in poster preparation. Your subject matter, imagination and spatial constraints will guide you better than any set of rules. However, there are a few things you may want to consider before setting up your presentation:

Effective poster session use:

- **color** or **darks and lights** to draw attention to the posters
- **type** or lettering (for main ideas) that is **large** enough to be read from several feet away
- **white space** and an uncluttered design to emphasize the subject matter
- **text** in **brief**, clear blocks of type
- a **straightforward organization** or **flow**

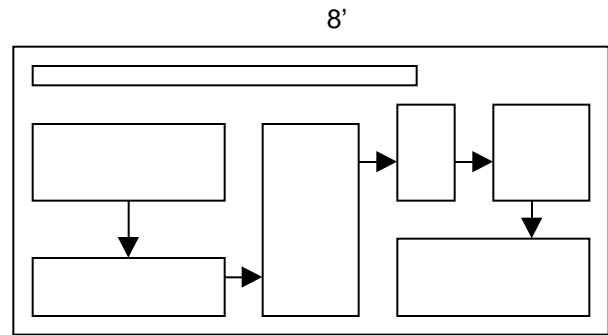
Common preparation time for poster sessions includes time to...

- get photos or other art enlarged
- gather additional materials
- design, layout, and assemble the pieces of the session
- prepare and Xerox handouts

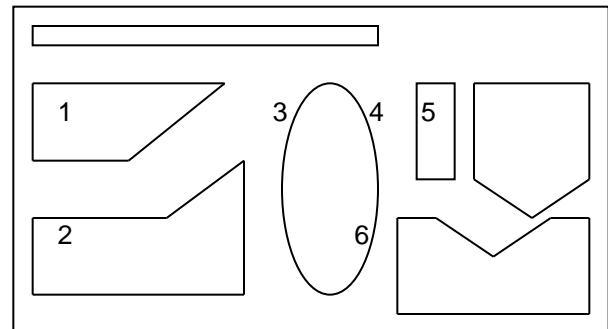
***which probably translates into about six weeks of discontinuous work.***

## THE DESIGN

The key to an inviting poster display is an uncluttered, straightforward design. The layout suggestion below is taken from the 1993 TESOL Poster Session guide.



Note that the various elements are of different size and orientation. There is space between each of the elements and a definite area for highlighting one aspect of the presentation. Arrows are used to direct the viewer through the display, and the flow is very natural.



In this view the layout has some different shapes and numbers are used to draw the viewer in.

Of course, it is not necessary to have a collection of boxes on your board—a more organic, circular presentation works too. It's often helpful to ask an objective colleague to give you feedback on your design.