

**Presenting a Poster at a Conference:  
Tips and Links to Online Resources**  
Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to the 2019 Program Committee\*

Beginning with the 2019 Call for Papers, SMT has added a feature to the online proposal submission page that allows members to specify whether they wish their proposal to be considered as

- a paper only,
- a poster only,
- or in either format.

Because researchers will submit the same proposal no matter which format is selected, we suggest that authors refer to this helpful document for tips on writing a strong proposal: <https://societymusictheory.org/administration/committees/pdc/proposals> .

For those who are targeting their submission specifically for a poster session, we suggest reading about poster sessions here: <https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PosterPresentations.html>. The website authors offer the following introduction:

“A poster presentation combines text and graphics to present your project in a way that is visually interesting and accessible. It allows you to display your work to a large group of other scholars and to talk to and receive feedback from interested viewers....

Poster presentation formats differ from discipline to discipline, but in every case, a poster should clearly articulate *what* you did, *how* you did it, *why* you did it, and what it *contributes* to your field and the larger field of human knowledge.”

Rather than discursive prose paragraphs, posters convey a lot of information with few words. Indeed, so that your ideas can be clearly articulated and have maximum impact, many sites recommend no more than 800 words for a poster. They typically begin with an abstract/summary, with supporting details outlined below in boldface headings, bulleted or numbered lists, short sentences, illustrative figures or examples, and a short references list. If you are proposing a poster to the Program Committee, you may wish to include headers and bulleted lists to capture the style of a poster. *Keep in mind, however, that the scholarly rigor and depth required for posters is the same as for papers; only the manner of presentation differs.*

Many universities maintain sites with helpful tips for designing a poster online. We recommend these two in particular:

<https://guides.nyu.edu/posters>

<https://nau.edu/undergraduate-research/poster-presentation-tips/>

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\* Advisory Committee members appointed by SMT President Robert Hatten were Elizabeth Marvin, Chair; Sara Bakker, Danny Jenkins, and Eric McKee.

Be sure that your poster can be read clearly from 3–4 feet away. Use clean graphics and large fonts. More information about font sizes can be found here:  
<https://glimages.s3.amazonaws.com/image/makesigns/sciposters/tutorials/poster-font-sizes.png>

For uniformity, we suggest that your poster measure 36” x 48”. Most websites suggest that you design your poster in PowerPoint, and many provide free downloadable templates. (Keep in mind that some of these sites want your printing business!) Also check with your academic institution for poster templates with your institutional logo.

Commercial websites with templates for downloads:

<https://templates.office.com/en-US/Posters>

<https://www.posterpresentations.com/free-poster-templates.html>

<https://www.genigraphics.com/templates>

Print your poster professionally by a commercial or campus print shop that has experience with large-format printing. Be sure to budget for this; large-format printing can be expensive (just as it can be expensive to print multi-page handouts for a large session). Your poster can be rolled and transported in a tube. Some print shops will print on fabric or nylon for ease of packing. Bring push-pins with you; SMT will provide a space for mounting.

At the conference, you will stay with your poster during the poster session to describe your research to those who visit. You should have an “elevator pitch” ready for each visit to your poster. Be prepared to repeat it many times and to converse with your visitors, answer questions, and take suggestions for future research. You may wish to create a handout that visitors can take with them (or that you link to through a QR code) and/or bring sound examples on a tablet or other device (permitted only with headphones).

Poster sessions provide a way for you to interact one-on-one with scholars who are interested with your work. Do your best to create a poster that conveys your ideas concisely, and then use your poster as a conversation-starter with your fellow SMT members!