

2021 AMA Research Challenge: How to prepare a research poster

Watch the AMA Research Challenge video on "How to prepare and present a virtual research poster," with steps on how to prepare a research poster and present in a virtual environment.

Featured speaker and topic

Charles Lopresto, DO discusses key elements for building a digital poster and how to keep an audience engaged in a pre-recorded presentation.

Speaker

- Charles Lopresto, DO

Transcript

Hi, my name is Charles Lopresto and I'm a recent graduate from Jamaica Hospital Medical Center's internal medicine residency program in New York City. I'm a member of the Research Challenge Advisory Committee, and I've served in a variety of leadership roles, including chair of the Resident and Fellow section of the Medical Society of State of New York, chair of the AMA Resident and Fellow sections Committee on Scientific Research, and I've served as a section editor for the Student, Resident and Fellow section of the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association.

I'm passionate about the intersection between research, evidence-based medicine and health care policy. The goal of this video is to offer guidelines on how to prepare a research poster and present in a virtual environment. As an introduction, for those who may be first time presenters, I'll start with some basics.

What is a poster?

Unlike a written manuscript, a poster is a concise, visually appealing summary of your research, which can both capture an audience's attention and summarize your work succinctly and accurately. Your poster will be shared alongside many others in our virtual environment, so plan a design that'll be attractive, but still professional. Presenting a poster in the AMA Research Challenge is a unique opportunity to share your research with one of the broadest audiences of leading physicians and researchers and has the potential to prompt meaningful discussion in the scientific community.

As a lead author, keep in mind this broad audience when preparing your poster.

Benefits of presenting a poster

Why present a poster? There are many benefits, including:

- An opportunity to present research findings to the scientific community.
- You can develop verbal and communication skills.
- You'll gain experience presenting to a broader audience.
- It also helps build your network and will help, of course, add those all-important lines on your CV.

Preparing digital vs. print poster

For our virtual poster gallery, I have a few points. While we all yearn for the excitement and camaraderie of in-person conferences and the poster hall, our AMA Research Challenge will continue to conduct virtually this year expanding on the success and increased participation we saw last year.

A few key differences between preparing a poster for an in-person meeting and a virtual poster gallery are as follows. Your digital poster in general should be more succinct than the design for a printed poster.

On a printed poster, you have the benefit of being able to print as large as you'd like and have a more expansive text in sections like the introduction, methods and discussion with the goal of your poster being able to stand by itself in a poster hall in the event you're not able to accompany it.

For your digital poster, you'll

- Create an attractive, single PowerPoint slide.
- Prerecord a two-minute presentation.

While your digital poster should be accurate and complete on its own, the design should focus less on text and more on attractive presentation of figures and/or data, so the virtual attendees and judges can easily take in, with your oral presentation filling in the key elements of your research in a succinct and easy to follow manner.

- **Keep figures and data to a reasonable number** for a poster, usually no more than three to four, as your audience may not be able to take in too much in the short time you have to present.
- The most important thing to remember is to **comply with all rules and instructions in the design and delivery** of your poster and presentation as judges follow strict rubric based on these rules.

For presenting your poster, we advise you present your research in a way that's palatable to a broad audience. While all virtual participants will have some interest in research, it's important to remember that not everyone may be familiar with the background or abbreviations specific to your field. Be sure to

- Define all abbreviations.
- Provide an appropriate level of background information.

That way the audience can appreciate the uniqueness and impact of your poster without getting lost.

The best layout for posters

Regarding the general poster layout. For first-time presenters, it's important to remember to layout your poster in an organized, but natural way. Your audience takes in new information in the same way that we're accustomed to throughout the rest of our day-to-day lives, reading from left to right and top to bottom.

- Organizing your sections sequentially in this manner is most effective.
- Your most important figures or data should be prominently displayed.
- Use a colorful yet professional manner that will attract your audience, but not overwhelm them.
- All other sections should visually appear supplemental and supporting to your main findings.

Best content for posters

Regarding poster content, remember that it should:

- **Be attractive and capture your main points.** In the virtual poster presentation environment, attendees will be skimming through hundreds of thumbnails of posters so keep this in mind when designing your poster to attract those audience members who are familiar with figures unique to your field.
- **Be sure your title is accurate,** but also attractive as it will also be a main factor in attracting attendees to view your poster.
- **Clarity and brevity are of utmost importance** in the virtual poster environment as you do not want your poster to overwhelm or confuse your audience.
- **Design your poster so that an audience member can listen to your presentation** while easily following along the various sections of your poster sequentially. Again, feel free to fill in more details with the oral portion of your presentation, thus limiting text and highlighting figures and data in the digital poster. Think carefully about what's the best way to visually represent your data, whether it be a graph, plot, diagram, chart or other figure type.
- **Avoid simple spreadsheets** that are text and number heavy when possible.
- **Use high-resolution, full-color images** when possible.

Tips for recording presentations

In your presentation, your time will be limited. Again, check the rules for details. It's important that your prerecorded presentation is engaging and explains your poster. Focus on the main points and keep your presentation simple. Do not go into too many details regarding your methods or data and keep the following guidelines in mind when prerecording your presentation.

- **Your attire.** Avoid distracting patterns or jewelry, neutral colors are best on camera.
- **Position your camera horizontally.** If you have a tripod that can hold your camera, you can use that.
- **Keep your camera at eye level or slightly above.** Lighting and background are key, shoot outside facing the sun if you can. If you need to record inside, find a bright room with lots of natural light.
- **Check your background.** Make sure it's not cluttered or with distractions.
- **Avoid distracting noises** while recording.
- **Don't zoom in.** This will reduce the production quality of your video. It's best to move the camera closer.
- **Make sure your lens and camera** are clear of any oils or dust.
- Most importantly, enjoy the process. **Make eye contact, smile and keep your audience engaged.**

I hope that you found these tips and guidelines valuable. Best of luck as you prepare your posters and present your research.



Disclaimer: The viewpoints expressed in this video are those of the participants and/or do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.