

How to Make a Philosophy Poster

for British Society for Ethical Theory

Poster presentations are less common in Philosophy than in other disciplines. It may initially seem rather a daunting task. However, even if you don't have a lot of technical or artistic skills, it is not too difficult to create an engaging research poster.

What is a poster presentation and why are BSET doing them?

During the poster presentation session, each presenter stands by their poster while conference participants browse the posters and ask questions of the presenters.

Poster presentations are becoming more common in Philosophy and provide a lot of benefits for both presenters and audience members:

- Presenters benefit from informal, detailed feedback on their ideas, structured around the poster.
- The process of making a poster can help refine ideas and clarify the structure of an argument.
- Conference participants benefit from being able to engage with a large variety of ideas, with more detailed engagement on offer if desired.
- Conference participants benefit from being able to quickly see the overall argument and to discuss the points that are most important from their point of view.
- The informal, one-on-one yet research-focused nature of poster presentations makes them great for making professional connections.

Software and Templates

- If you are a Microsoft user, the simplest way to make a poster is in Powerpoint. If you use Mac, you may prefer Pages. For the more technically advanced, there are many more sophisticated design programmes.
- There are many templates and guides to creating research posters available on the internet.

Size and Layout of Posters

- BSET allows poster presenters to display 2x A3 posters.
- This makes it cheaper and easier for presenters to print their posters. Dividing the content into two can also provide some helpful structure.
- Posters can be portrait or landscape.

Text

- Text on your posters should be typed in an appropriate font. We recommend a font size of 28 point or above.
- You will probably find that there is much less space for text than expected. Probably the most difficult thing about making a research poster is having to summarise the key ideas so concisely.
- Remember that in the poster presentation you will be able to talk to readers and to explain points in more detail. So don't worry if you do not have space to say everything you would like to.

Graphics

- Graphics should be of an appropriate resolution (at least 150 dpi) and should not infringe copyright.
- There are lots of places to find royalty-free images online, such as Wikicommons Images, Unsplash, and Stocksnap.io
- Always check the resolution and usage restrictions before using. A lot of royalty-free sites request or require that you include an attribution to tell people where the image has come from.
- You might prefer to draw your own images. This does not require a lot of artistic talent. Even very simple stick figures can be very effective. You can draw these on your computer either straight onto your poster in Powerpoint or using a simple graphics programme like Paint. Alternatively, it is quite straightforward to scan a picture and add it to your poster.
- You may also want to use tables, flow diagrams etc. These can be effective means of presenting ideas and arguments on a poster.

Content

- The content of poster differs from that of traditional forms of philosophy, most obviously in that you will be not be able to give anything like the same level of detail. Nonetheless, the overarching aim of a poster, is like that of a paper, to present the audience with an original and significant argument.
- You may find that you do not have space to present the whole of your paper and decide instead to focus on one particular aspect of argument. Veteran poster presenter Molly Gardener advises: *"I have found that the posters are especially good for presenting nuggets of papers, rather than full papers. If you can communicate an interesting nugget really well on your poster, then you'll get lots of good feedback."*¹

¹ "Poster Sessions at Philosophy Conferences", Justin W., *Daily Nous* 28 August 2015 at 9:50 am. Accessed at <http://dailynous.com/2015/08/28/poster-sessions-at-philosophy-conferences/> 19 September 2017.

Presentation

- The distinguishing feature of a poster is that it involves *graphically presenting* the content to an audience.
- The essential thing is to think about your *audience*. No matter how interesting or insightful the content is, it is wasted if you do not succeed in conveying it to the audience. So, you need to make efforts to engage the audience by, for example, providing original illustrations and eye-catching graphics, and making sure the poster is well laid out.
- Think about what the audience is able to digest – and the amount of space that you have. Do not try to cover too much ground or too many distinct points.
- The poster should be suitable for an intelligent person who has not studied the subject. Do not assume that the audience knows what you are trying to say. Be sure to explain each point carefully.
- In a poster format, it is vital to present views and ideas in a way that is not only clear but also concise.
- The audience should be able to easily see your assessment of each argument and your overall conclusion. You may wish to use separate “boxes” to make these stand out.

Final tip

- The printed poster may not look quite as it does on the screen. Print out a small version of the poster to check alignment etc. (Looking at the poster in print preview can also be helpful.)