Best titles are short conclusions, not long introductions.

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POSTER CHILD OF SCIENCE
A poster is your first opportunity to organize and communicate your research to members outside of your lab. It will help you to practise telling and “drawing” your science story and its design should be based on its concepts, themes and transitions. Most posters are bad not because they are ugly (they are) but because they fail to present concisely what was done and, more importantly, why it was done. Most posters have too much on them. Less is more: get to the point, then stop.

POSTER DUMPSTER FIRES
You will tell.

FORCES OF NATURE
The reader won’t care what is important, so tell them.

Establish a STORY PATH and stick to it. Saliently and intuitively code key contrasts (e.g. healthy/disease, wildtype/mutant). The reader won’t know what is important, so tell them.

Map salience to pertinence. When used in moderation, colors like orange or magenta say “look here”. You cannot look everywhere.

Rounded corners slightly for eye comfort.

Good explanations are ones conveniently placed. Embed similar diagrams next to relevant text. Some graphics don’t need a legend—make room for explanations within. Callout lines should be rectilinear or at 45° if the graphic already has such elements.

USE COLOR FOR THEMES OR DATA ENCODING and not as garnish. The first color to appear should begin the core story. Avoid unintentional emphasis by equalizing for perceptual luminance.

Choose a color scheme that is easier on the eyes—interpret the figure instead. Italicize variables in fit diagnostics and use shaded bands for confidence intervals. Highlight regions of interests with a solid color (or grey), not outlines.

Establish subdomains with content. Use multiply blend mode to layer dense data. Hollow points make excellent outliers.

Annotate the axes and explain the key contrasts.

Don’t tell the reader what is obvious: “a linear fit to a scatter plot is redundant. Don’t tell me what I’m seeing—interpret the figure instead. Italicize variables in fit diagnostics and use shaded bands for confidence intervals. Highlight regions of interests with a solid color (or grey), not outlines.

Avoid creating knots by using color keys in the legend instead. The reader needs to know to understand enough to ask insightful questions and frontload this information.

Create alignment guides and use them consistently—the eye will find even small misalignments. Large text may need to be nudged.

Align independently of subscripts.

TABULATE plots and text seamlessly with a caption or row for explanations. Italicize text with care and look for unintended italics in subscripts.

ARROWS imply a relationship or change. Do not use them to guide the eye, which can be achieved with spacing and alignment.

Maintain and control proportions
This poster is 16” × 12” (1152 × 864 pt), uses Helvetica Neue with a 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55 pt scale ladder and is legible on most screens.

Sans-serif is clearer than serif at small sizes and suitable for modest amounts of copy.

Keep line length short and hyphenate instead of fully justifying.

Avoid obvious headings such as “references”. Citations can be set in a block of text, with bold numbers like this: [1]. R. Brighurst, Elements of Typographical Style, 4th edn (New York: S. J. and T. J. Gerharz, 1818). Unless a specific citation style is required, use a compact style that also includes the title.