CS 461/462/463
Information on Making a Poster Presentation

- **Analyze your audience!** Put yourself in their place. How are they motivated? How technical are they? What would they like to know? How would they like to see it presented? What do they care about? What do they not care about? What will really catch their attention?

- **Analyze your message!** What are you trying to accomplish with this poster? Are you bestowing information? Are you selling a product? Are you selling yourself for a job? Are you selling your project for internal or external funding? Are you selling the idea that OSU CS students are a cut above? (For the Engineering Expo, yes, this is one of the messages!)

- People don’t read posters (at least not at first) -- they quickly scan them. Make that easy to do. You need to “grab” the viewer’s attention – you have (at most) 10 seconds.

- Poster Presentations are the visual equivalent of the “elevator speech”. You don’t have to give every single detail. Think of your total project information as existing in three categories:
  1. Must know – include this in the poster
  2. Good to know – sprinkle some in the poster, but not all
  3. Nice to know – keep in reserve to tell people when they ask you for more information

- The poster should read left-to-right, top-to-bottom:

- **Sections:**
  - Project title – be correct, informative, and brief.
  - The second line should be the project “tagline” – short, but can be longer than the title. Why do I care? Why is this important? It can be something catchy and rememberable, but doesn’t have to be. It can be a little whimsical, but not silly.
  - Team member names, advisor name(s), affiliation, company logo, email addresses.
  - Project introduction and background: Why did you undertake this project? What generated the idea? What goals and hypotheses did you have?
  - Project description: What did you do? How did you do it? Why did you do it this way?
  - Use blocks and block titles – it makes the poster easier to scan.
  - Display your results – photos, tables, graphs, bar charts, pie charts, bullet lists, images. *Use captions* – these visuals need to be able to stand on their own without someone having to read through the text to see what they are about.
  - Conclusions section – What are the most important conclusions? What is the significance of the conclusions? If you got unexpected results, explain what you think happened.
  - Others – Acknowledgements, References if it makes sense
• Everything on the poster should be comfortably viewable from ~6 feet away. Obvious section headings direct the viewer’s attention.

• Use good fonts: use sans serif fonts (Helvetica, Arial) for titles, headings, and captions; and serif fonts (Times New Roman, Palatino) for text.

• Use good point sizes for a PowerPoint slide being turned into a 36” wide poster. These are pretty good, but you can experiment: title 32, tag line 20, section headings 12, section text 10. You can test this for yourself. If the goal is to have a 36” wide poster easily readable at 6’, then an 11” wide poster should be easily readable from about 2’.

• First common mistake – too much material, too dense, too esoteric. Make it look clean and readable. Don’t use text where bullets will do. Appeal to what the viewer wants to know, not necessarily what you want to tell them. Leave the viewer asking to know more!

• Second common mistake – not enough material. Don’t let it look like you haven’t done enough work to fill a poster.

• Pay attention to good grammar and spelling. People tend to fixate on flaws like this. Sad, but true…

• Have someone unfamiliar with your project review the poster. Is it interesting and understandable? Does it inform?

• CS 461/462/463 specifics:
  - OSU logo
  - Identify as a CS Capstone Project
  - Company’s logo
  - Team photo (we will take these in the spring)

• Have poster-writer’s block? Try this: jot down potential points and potential visuals on separate Post-It notes. Then go to a white-board and cluster them.

Each team will produce a preliminary poster in the form of a PowerPoint slide. This is due 23:59:59 on Tuesday, November 20. Email one poster .ppt file per team to me. Please give it a name of the form teamx.ppt, where ‘x’ is your lower-case team letter.

Please put everything in the PowerPoint foreground. Don’t put anything in the PowerPoint Master. This makes it much, much faster for me to put all teams’ posters into one file.

We will look at each poster in class on Tuesday, November 27.