



## Preparing for your poster session

Use this worksheet to map out your poster spiel. Despite all the questions here, your spiel should only take 2-5 minutes, tops! You should also have a much shorter, 30-second spiel in your pocket. Think of a poster this way: It's an opportunity for a conversation. Give your overview, and then leave it open for Q&A. This Q&A can very well be both ways, as the person at your poster may have some insight for you. Let them ask about the things they're interested in after you give your overview.

Answer the questions below without worrying about the wording. Partial sentences are okay.

### THE INTRO

Start with a what and why statement that leaves room for them to ask themselves the big question (And? What did you find?):

1) Answer what/why

What did you do? (No more than one sentence.)

Why did you do it? (No more than one sentence.)

2) Convey/expand on your goals

What were your goals? (No more than one sentence per goal. It's okay to phrase them as questions, and/or use bullets.)

Now put it together. You may want to state your why before the what (we wanted to learn xx, so we yy). See what works.

## THE BODY

This is where you give your tour, and tell your story. Speak to your graphics. Find a path through your poster, focusing on your visuals, and spend only a couple sentences on each. Feel free to skip some graphics. You can come back to them during the Q&A. The important thing is to hit your major points.

3) Major steps/points, listed as bullets:

- setting (what context does your visitor need? Geographical, historical, tectonic, technical?)

- what you did

- challenges and solutions (if any)

- results

## THE CLOSING

3) Summarize your findings

What did you find? (No more than one sentence per finding/result.)

4) Big ideas

What do you want to leave your visitor with? Why does your work matter? What's particularly awesome about it? (No more than three short sentences.) Who will this benefit? What knowledge does it add?

5) Future work (optional)

What would you like to do next? (No more than one sentence per point.)

Try it out.

If it's too long, which it probably will be, figure out what to cut. Simplify, simplify, simplify. Remember they can ask you for more detail.

You may need to switch up the order of the points above. Maybe you need to start with some context, or ask a question. This is just meant to get you thinking about your major points and the big picture.

Practice again. Rinse, repeat.

Tips:

- Enthusiasm. (Genuine.) If you're not interested, your visitor won't be either.
- Speak to your graphics.
- Read your audience. If you know their background, choose your vocabulary accordingly. Feel free to check in to see if they're familiar with the terminology you're using, and be prepared to define or explain if they're not, and/or stick with the big picture ideas.
- Speak simply.
- Stay out of the weeds unless asked to go there.
- Watch out for these words, and use them only in context: like, kind of, I guess, actually, just

Additional tips from SACNAS:

- Don't apologize—it draws attention to the problems rather than emphasizing your results. Address issues if your visitor brings them up.
- Think of yourself as a tour guide.
- Remember you have business cards!
- Practice—your spiel will move along faster if you do.