Communicating Your Rare Disease Research Widely: Making Your Poster Engaging and Accessible

This document gives tips on how to make a clear, interesting, and easy-to-read poster.

This guidance was developed by a group of public, patients, and researchers. We designed it to help you maximise the impact of your poster at the **Rare Disease Research Conference 2025**. The conference brings together a wide audience with different interests and perspectives. For example, you might meet people living with rare diseases, advocates, academics, industry professionals, policymakers, researchers, charities, and healthcare professionals.

A well-designed poster can grab attention and help everyone understand your message. Focusing on accessibility helps you share knowledge more effectively and reach a wider audience. Many people with rare disease may experience a form of disability. You should consider accessibility in your poster so that everyone can engage with it and understand your research.

Even small changes can make your research more approachable. Simple adjustments like improving the layout, using clear language, or adding visuals can make a big difference. Your poster design choices could benefit people with sight loss or visual impairment, sensory sensitivities, colour blindness, intellectual disabilities, and neurodivergent conditions like ADHD, autism, and dyslexia.

We encourage you to try adapting one or two elements to help your work connect with as many people as possible!

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Designing Your Poster

Layout and Structure

- ☐ **Use simple language.** Avoid complicated medical or scientific terms so that everyone can understand your message, even if they don't have special knowledge.

- ☐ **Keep it organised and easy to read.** Use clear paragraph breaks to separate ideas and make the text easier to follow. This also makes information easier to absorb.

- ☐ **Use bullet points.** They make information easier to read and understand by breaking it down into smaller pieces.

- ☐ **Add punctuation.** Use full stops and commas to help people understand the text better.

Text and Fonts

- ☐ **Keep the same font style.** Use one font style for the whole poster to keep it neat and easy to read.

- ☐ **Make the font big enough.** Use size 16 or larger so people can read it from a distance.

- ☐ **Use a sans-serif font.** Fonts like Arial or Verdana are easier to read than serif fonts like Times New Roman, especially for people with dyslexia or visual processing issues.

- ☐ **Use 1.5 line spacing.** This is the standard for digital accessibility and makes the text less cramped and easier to follow.

Visuals and Graphics

- ☐ **Use images, graphs, and tables.** They make the poster more interesting and easier to understand. Try to use more visuals than text.

- ☐ **Provide captions.** Add a description under each image to explain why it's important.

- ☐ **Avoid certain colour combinations.** Red/green and blue/yellow can be hard for people with colour blindness to tell apart.

- ☐ **Print on matte paper.** Glossy paper can create glare, which makes reading harder for people with sensory issues, dyslexia, or vision problems.

- ☐ **Avoid bright white backgrounds.** Bright white can be harsh and tiring to look at. Instead, use soft, neutral colours like beige, grey, cream, or tan. These colours are gentler on the eyes and better for people with sensory sensitivities.

Creating Digital Poster Elements

This section shows simple ways to make your poster more inclusive with technology.

- ☐ **Add a QR code.** This can give people access to extra content or a different version of your poster. We like [Navilens](#) for their accessible QR codes.

- ☐ **Add ALT text for all images, including charts and graphics.** ALT text describes what an image shows, which helps people using screen readers and other assistive tools understand the poster. Without it, images won't be read properly. Learn how to write ALT text under our 'Additional Resources'.

- ☐ **Provide an audio recording.** An audio version of your poster can help people with sight loss or those who prefer to hear information. A short voiceover (3 to 10 minutes) explaining the poster could be useful. This can be recorded on your mobile phone or using software like Zoom or Powerpoint.

- ☐ **Avoid text boxes.** Text boxes can be hard for screen readers to understand, so it's best to use regular text instead.

- ☐ **Share your poster in accessible formats.** When sharing digitally, Word format (.docx) is more accessible than Powerpoint (.ppt).

Additional Resources

Your institution's Accessibility Officer or EDI Officer

How to Write ALT Text ([LINK](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/everything-you-need-to-know-to-write-effective-alt-text-df98f884-ca3d-456c-807b-1a1fa82f5dc2))
https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/everything-you-need-to-know-to-write-effective-alt-text-df98f884-ca3d-456c-807b-1a1fa82f5dc2

NAVILens Technology ([LINK](https://www.navilens.com/en/))
https://www.navilens.com/en/

AHEAD Poster and Graphic Design Accessibility Guidelines ([LINK](https://www.ahead.ie/allyship-accessible-comms-posters))
https://www.ahead.ie/allyship-accessible-comms-posters

National Adult Literacy Agency ([LINK](https://www.nala.ie/))
https://www.nala.ie/

This is a Living Document

We value your feedback, it helps us! We are committed to making posters as informative and inclusive as possible. If you have suggestions or would like to be involved in reviewing the next version, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact Information

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