

Scientific Poster Workshop

Carsten Kutzner, 29.3.2012

Assembling the content

Poster design

Printing & presenting

The purpose of a poster

A good poster will not make up for bad research, but a bad poster can ruin good research.^[1]

- Introduce a piece of your work to colleagues.
- Summarize what you did, how you did it, and what you learned.
- Stimulate exchange of ideas between you and your audience.
- Opportunity for networking, many collaborations begin in front of a poster board.



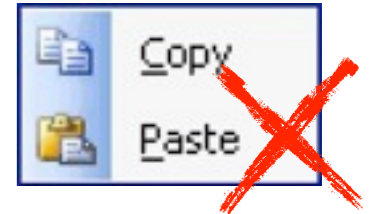
[1] Poster Design Workshop,
<http://depts.washington.edu/uwmcnair/Poster%20Design%20Workshop2007p.pdf>

Poster content

Content elements of a poster

- **Title**, names and affiliations of authors
- **Abstract** – Summary
- **Introduction** – What is the question and why is it significant?
- **Methods** – What is your strategy?
- **Results** – What did you find, what are you adding?
- **Conclusions**, Outlook – Implications, what can you recommend, what next?
- **References**
- **Acknowledgements**

Assembling the content of your poster



- **Strategy #1**

If you already have lots of material, **sort** the main points into the individual blocks abstract, intro, methods, results, ...

– *Can you make a convincing story?*

- **Strategy #2**

Start from the **plots** you want to show, write captions that outline the main conclusions that can be drawn from each plot, add intro and methods sections, finish with abstract

- **Strategy #3**

Focus on the story behind the data:

Start by writing down your main findings you want to communicate.

data

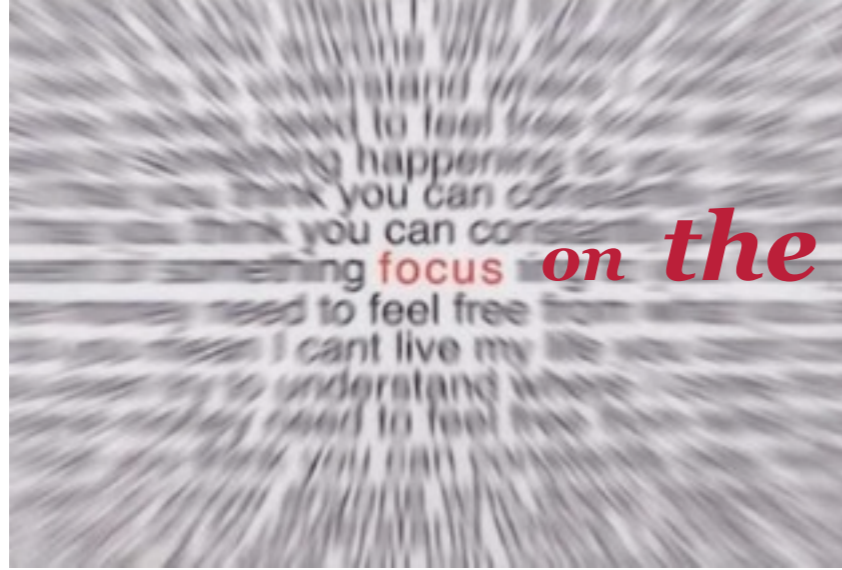


findings



*Try to explain that to a colleague at lunch time,
i.e. without a blackboard, plots, data!*

Then think about what plots would help to tell that story.



on the key points

Try to convey your main findings in 3–5 minutes.

Can you sell your work in 10 seconds?

- In a poster session, the following is usually very limited:
space (on your poster, but also in front of your poster)
time (of the person you are talking to)
- **Most** of the people approaching your poster will only spend a very limited amount of time at the poster (but stay if something catches their attention). Typically people want to know what is your main finding.
- **Some** people want to know the simplified story.
- Just **a few** want to discuss the details, and maybe have worked on a similar topic.

Build a content hierarchy

- First, *focus on what is essential for a simplified version* of your story.
Never conceal this by the details you add!
- Then add what is needed to support your conclusions.
- Add details if space permits.

important

less important less important less important

detail detail detail detail detail detail detail detail

more details more details more details more details more details more details

Poster layout

General considerations

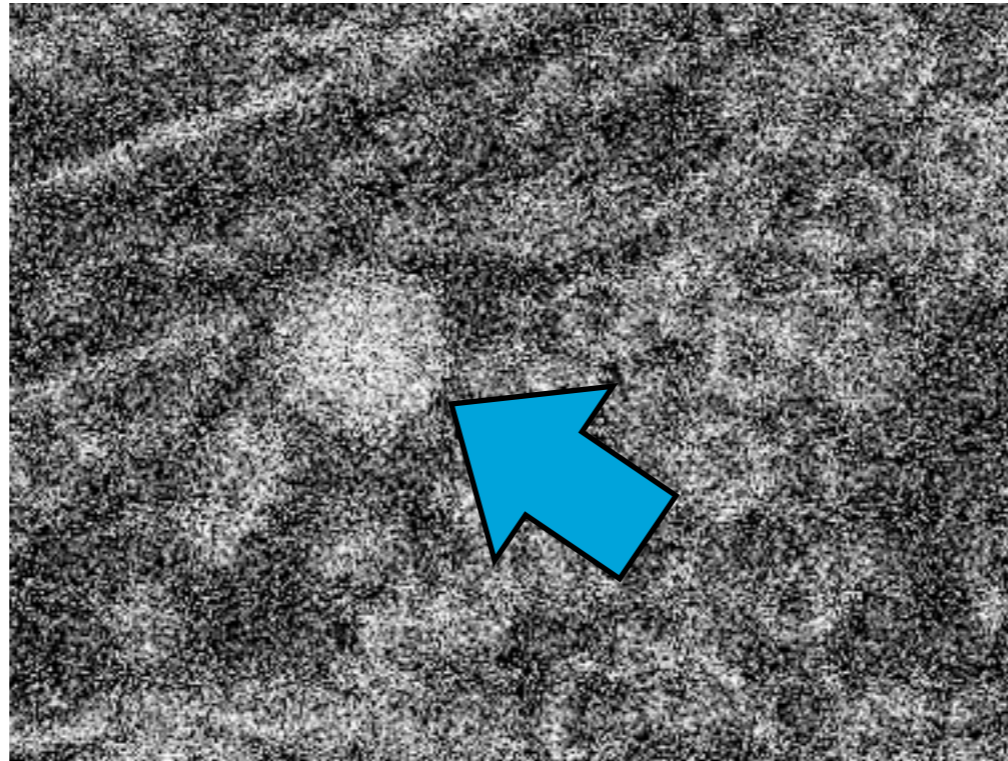
- poster = illustrated abstract
- ***Make it easy for the reader*** (all other rules are a result of this main rule!)
 - keep it simple, aim for clarity, consider level of audience
 - everything should be readable from 2–3 meters distance
 - Contrast: clearly distinguish different elements by typeface, size, color, ...
- start with a white page and whenever you add something, be shure why and what purpose it serves

Remember, no one ever complained that someone's poster was too easy to read.

(Block, 1996)

Use a visual language

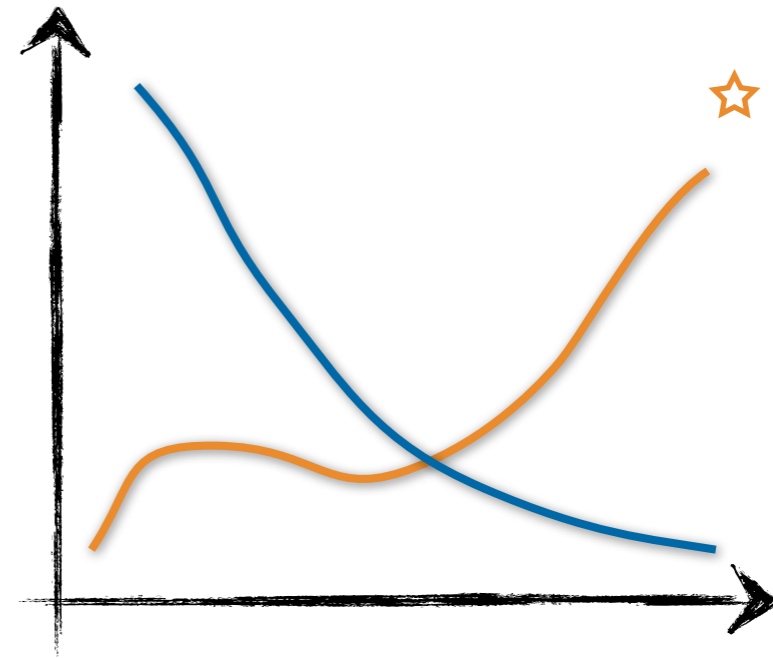
- **Visual language / visual grammar** = graphic hierarchy that helps to identify
 - what is important, and
 - what belongs together.
 - It encodes logic in non-text elements
- **similar** things have **similar** properties (type, color, linestyle, shading, ...)
- **different** things have **contrasting** properties!
- which of your ideas can you explain without text?



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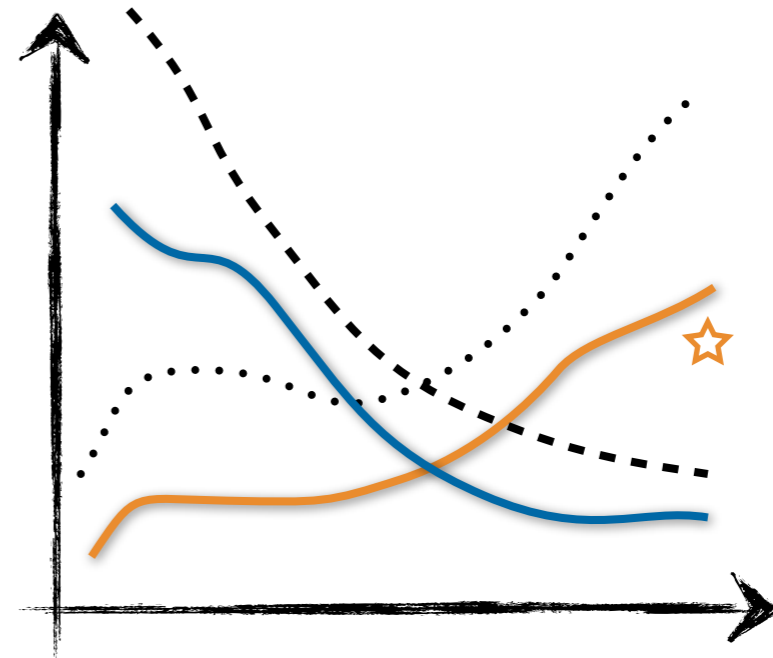
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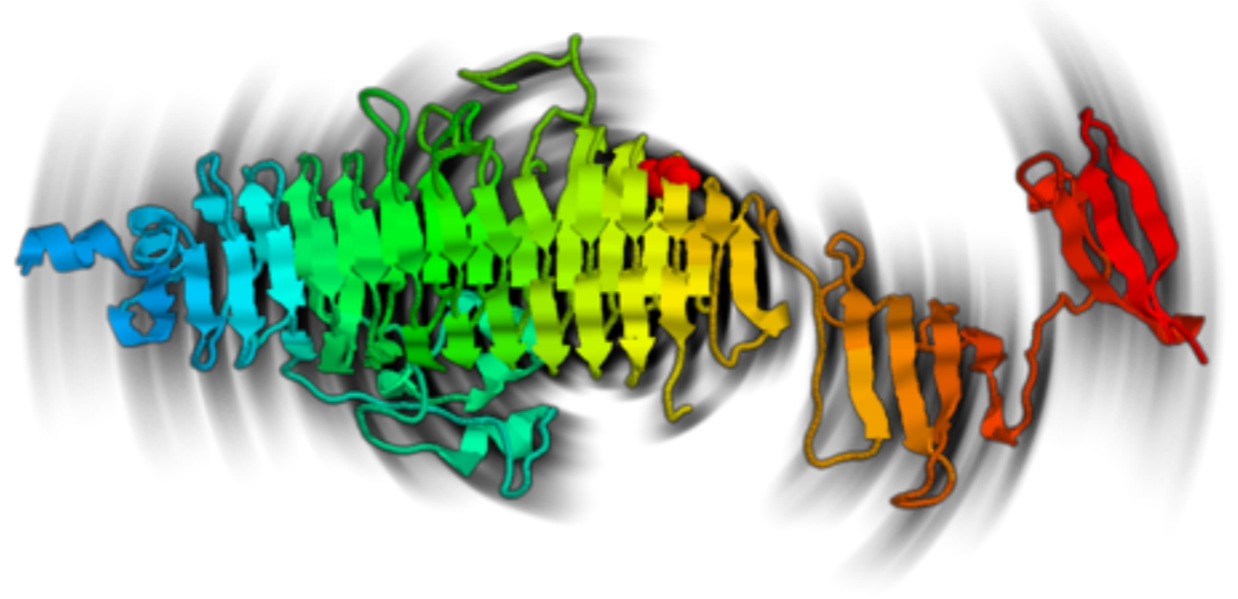
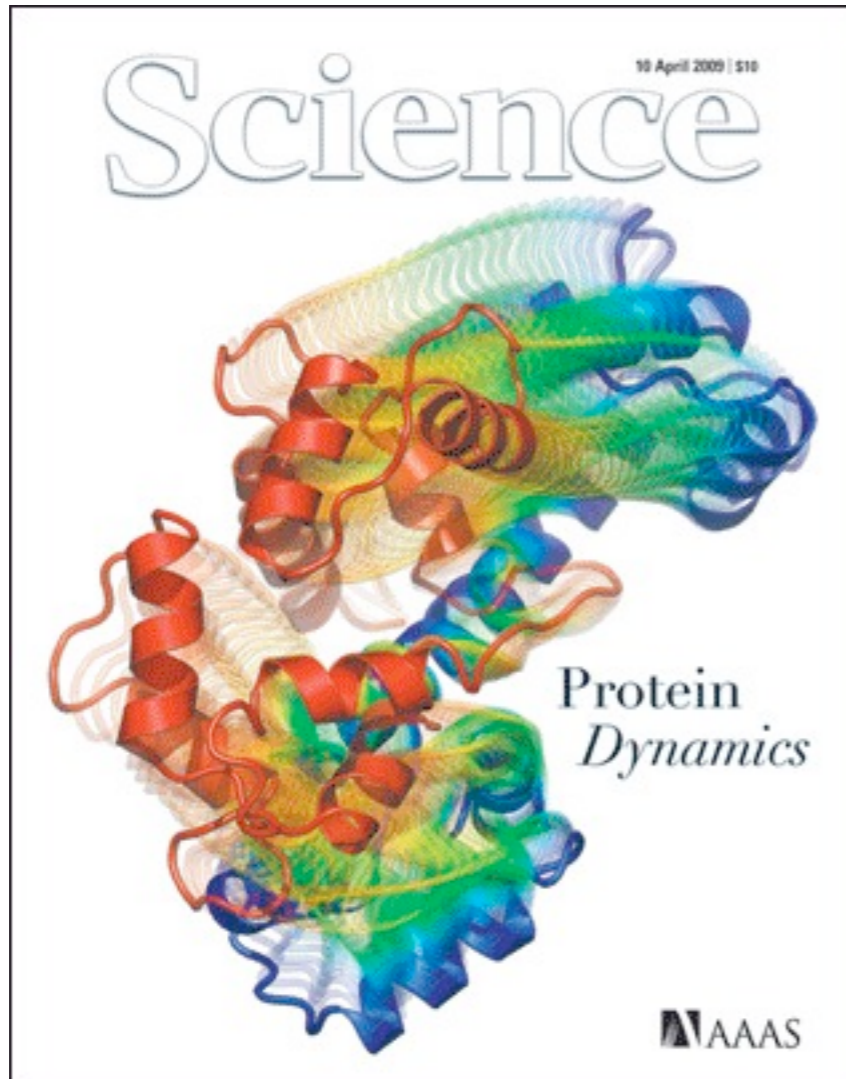


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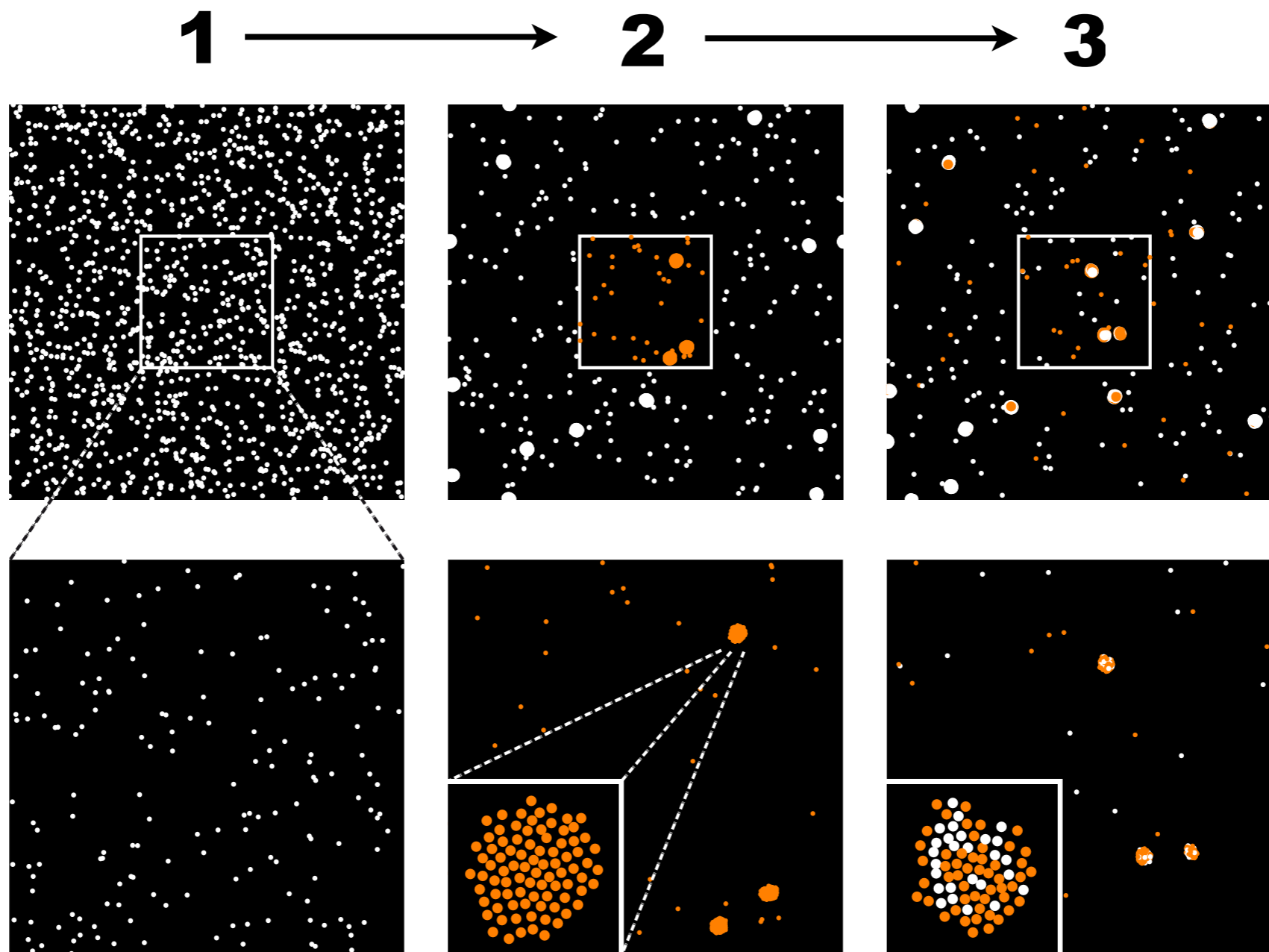


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***General
poster layout***

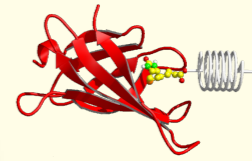


MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT



Short and compelling title

Author 1, Author 2, Institute, Department, eMail



nice to provide first names rather than initials

Also questions or answers are ok as titles

A picture of yourself helps people to find you

Abstract

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Introduction

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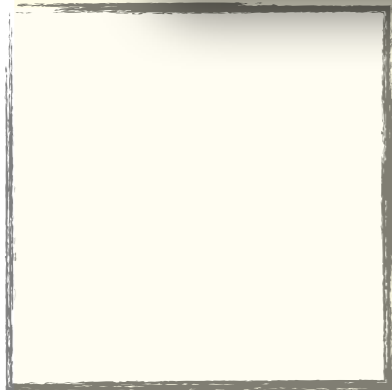
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use a grid!

headings clearly exposed

let blank space organize the poster



Don't let the reader guess the sequence

Author 1, Author 2, Institute, Department, eMail

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For increased clarity, use
dot points:

- first idea
- second idea
- third idea

Pictures : Text ratio 50:50

Break up text in paragraphs that
are easy to digest.

Avoid paragraphs with > 10
sentences Avoid jargon.

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Make sequence clear using
numbers or letters!

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Don't hide key findings under the surface

Author 1, Author 2, Institute, Department, eMail

Abstract

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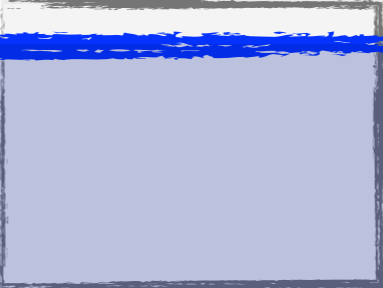
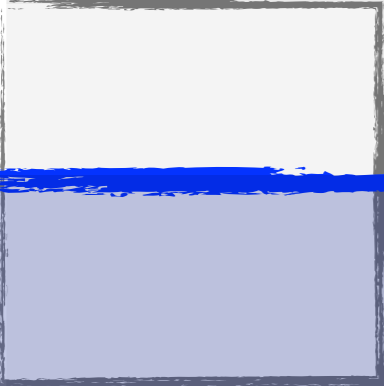
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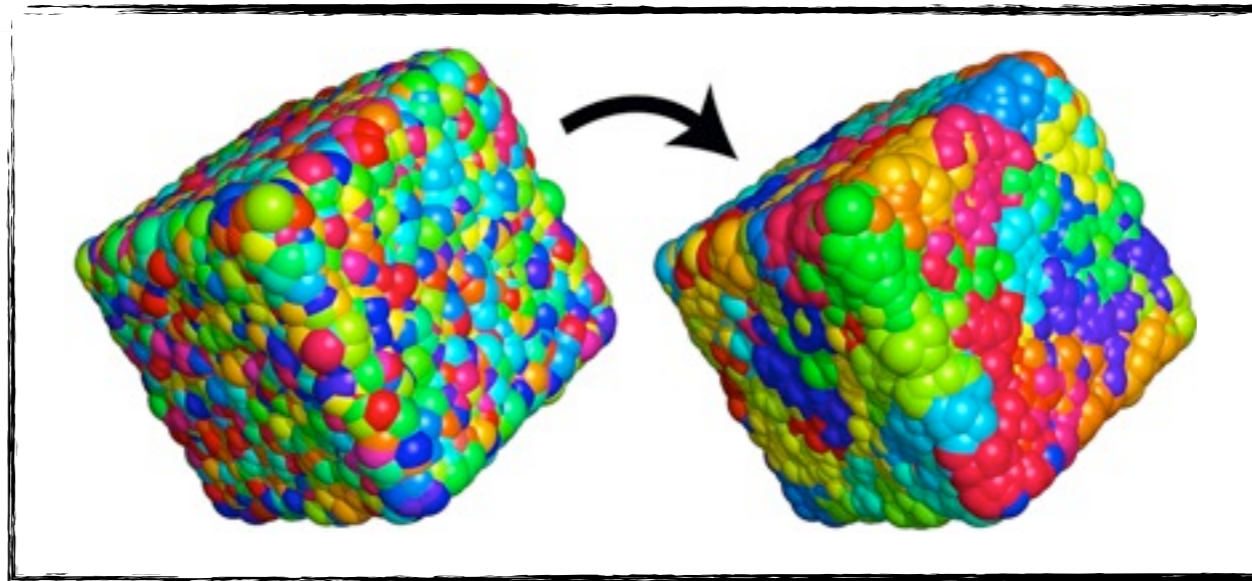
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If appropriate, place an eye-catcher

Author 1, Author 2, Institute, Department, eMail

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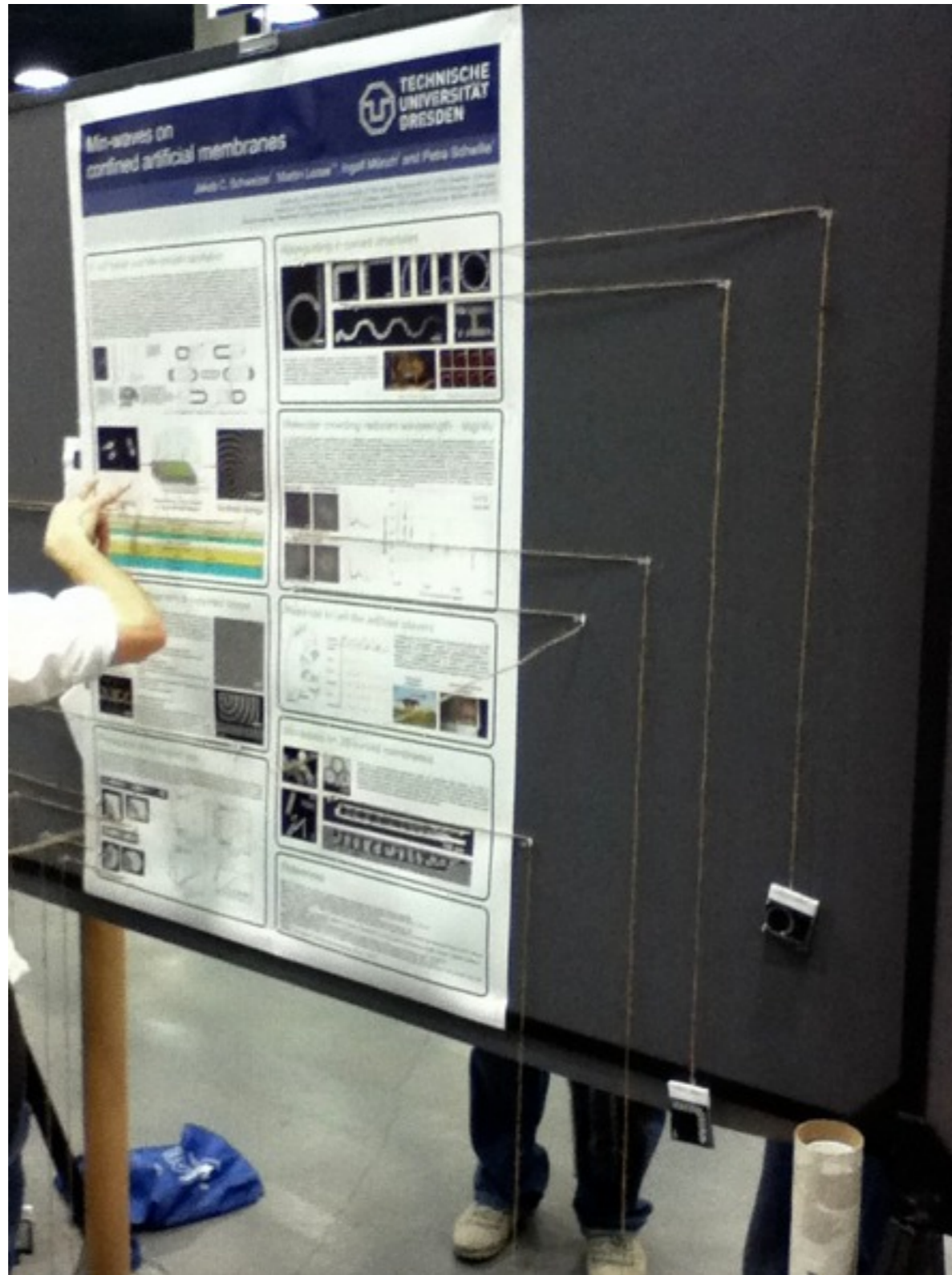
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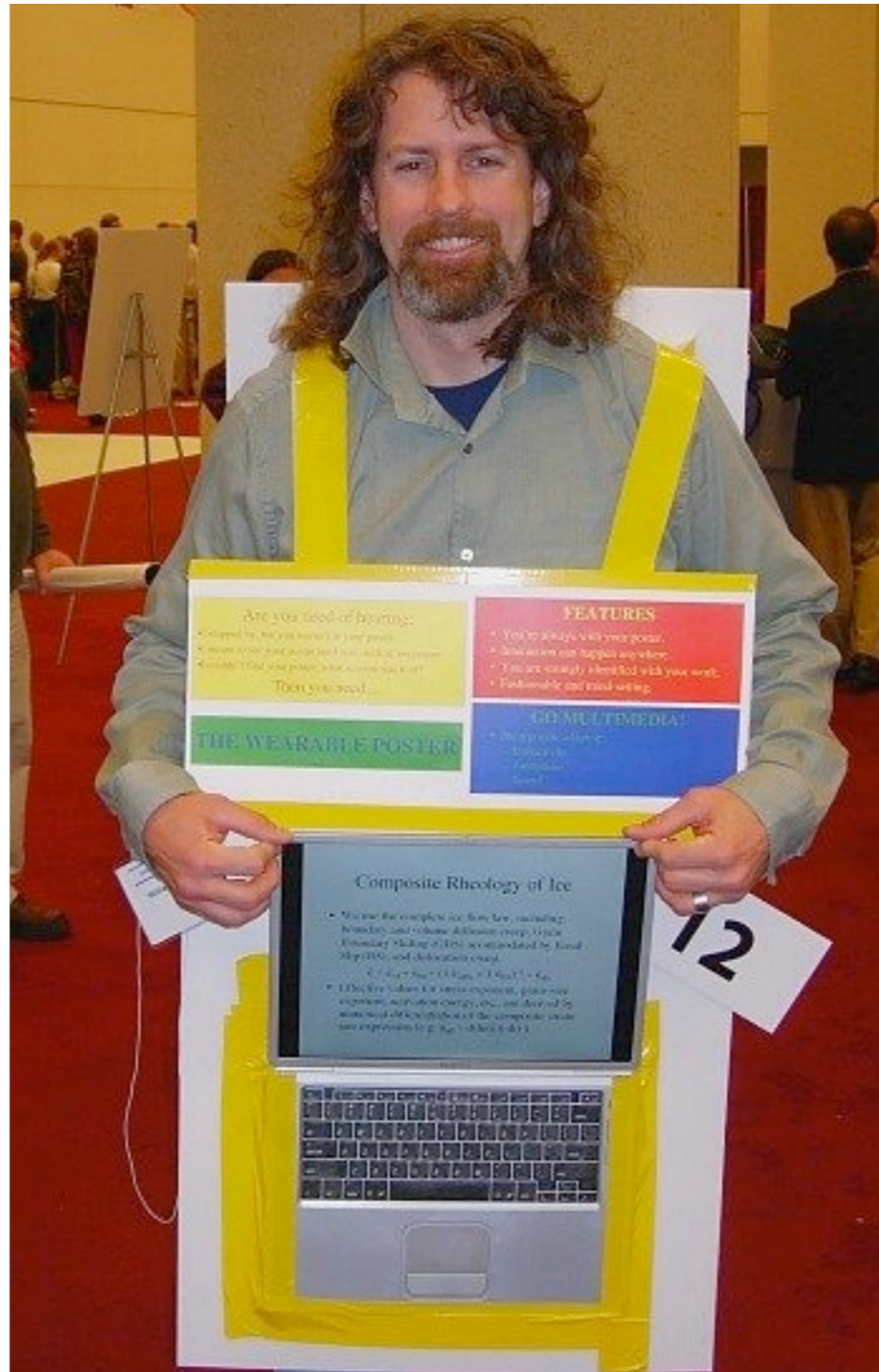
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... or some kind of attention-getting gimmick.



J. Schweizer's poster at the Biophysical Society meeting 2012 in San Diego



Are you tired of having:
• Clipped by the postman in your pants
• A room where your poster has to be rolled up
• A poster that you never see once you're done?

Then you need
THE WEARABLE POSTER

FEATURES

- You're always with your poster.
- Installation and removal anywhere.
- You are strongly identified with your work.
- Foldable and travel set up.

GO MULTIMEDIA!

- The poster will be:
• Portable
• Durable
• Easy to use

Composite Rheology of Ice

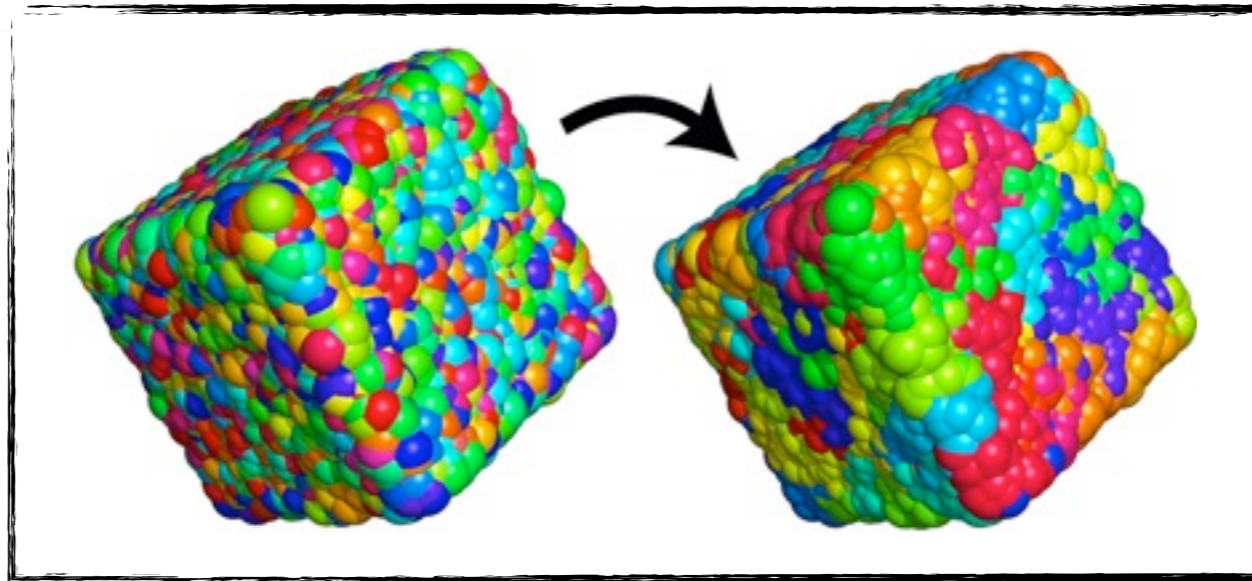
- We use the complex ice flow law, including
boundary and volume diffusion creep, finite
strain sliding (1976) as introduced by basal
slip (1976), and deformation creep.
- $\dot{\epsilon} = \dot{\epsilon}_0 \left(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma_0} \right)^n \left(\frac{T}{T_0} \right)^m$
- Effective values for stress exponent, grain size
sensitivity, activation energy, etc., are derived by
numerical differentiation of the composite ice
flow expressions (e.g. $\dot{\epsilon} = \dot{\epsilon}_0 \left(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma_0} \right)^n \left(\frac{T}{T_0} \right)^m$)

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Use shadows for layering

Author 1, Author 2, Institute, Department, eMail

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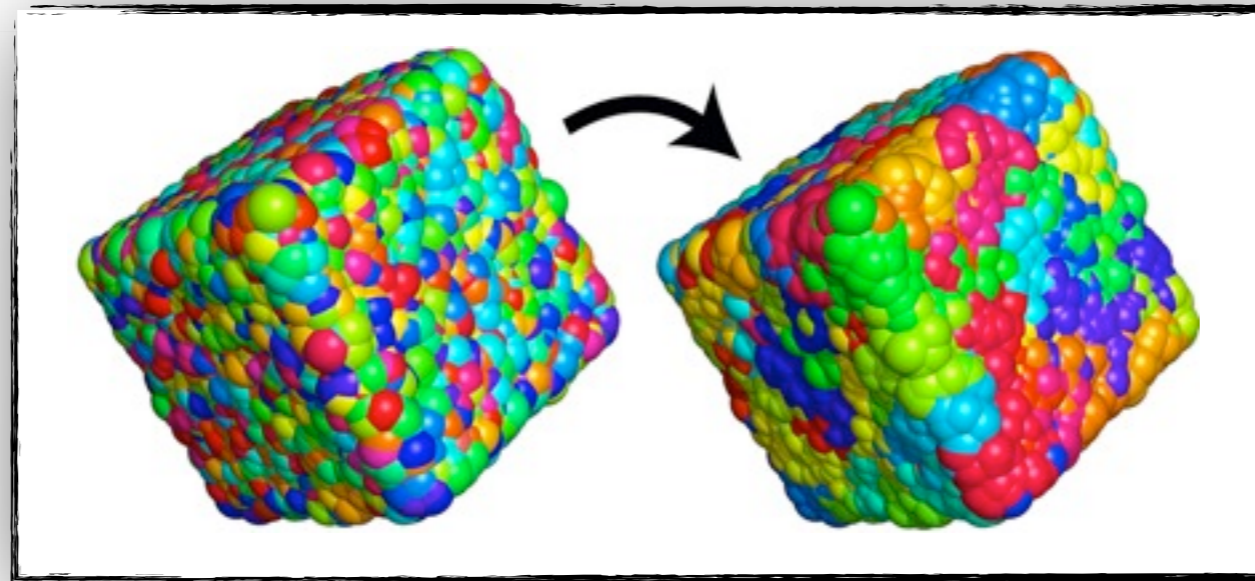
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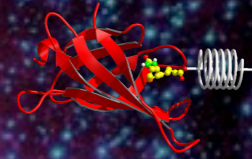
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WISDOM BEGETS THE SPIRIT

Be aware of busy backgrounds!



Author 1, Author 2, Institute, Department, eMail

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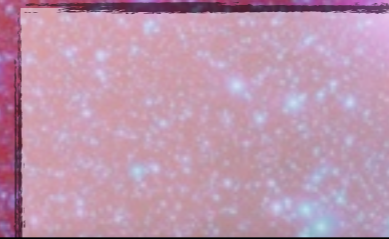
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Avoid an over-busy poster.

Text

Use graphics wherever you can instead of text.

Choose legible, distinct fonts

abcdefghijklmnopq iIlL123

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- Typefaces

- use 1 type for the text, preferably serif
- 1 type for title and headings (may be the same), preferably sans serif

- Font size: Use the same size for all text of a hierarchical level

- body text 18–28 pt
- headings 30–40 pt
- title 70–100 pt (if your title does not fit, shorten it!)

- Use character/paragraph formats!!!

Legible typefaces

Gill Sans, light, *light italic*, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Optima, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Helvetica, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123 R

Arial, narrow, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123 R

Georgia, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

News Gothic, *italic*, **bold** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Minion, *italic*, semibold, **bold**, condensed, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Century – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Verdana, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Times New Roman, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Palatino, *italic*, **bold**, **bold italic** – abcdefghijkl iIll123

Readability

Readability is related to how you arrange the type and is affected by size, leading, line length, alignment, and letter and word spacing. Even a legible typeface, like the Georgia, can lose readability when set 14/15 (left). But its readability improves dramatically when set 12/18 (right).

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Use on ~11 words per line for best readability, or ~40 characters

Avoid paragraphs with > 10 sentences.

The aim of the theoretical biophysics group is to contribute to the understanding of the physics and function of biomolecules - particularly proteins - at the atomic level. Here, two lines of questions span the field at the interface between physics, molecular biochemistry and computer science:

(1) What structural and dynamical properties are common to proteins? How can these highly organized, but irregular pieces of condensed matter be described in terms of many-body systems?

(2) How does a given protein work? What is the mechanism of such biochemical 'nano-machine'?

New concepts to neglect irrelevant degrees of freedom as well as efficient and problem-oriented, parallel algorithms for molecular dynamics simulations, being indispensable tools in that area, are our methodological focus.

Both lines of questions phrased above are closely interlinked.

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#1 *readability*

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Limit yourself to 250, 500, 800 words!

more text usually means less communication

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1k

Emphasizing

This example demonstrates the use of *italics* as technique for emphasis (use sparingly!). Which do you think works best to draw attention to the word in question in a subtle, yet effective way?

This example demonstrates the use of **boldface** as technique for emphasis (use sparingly!). Which do you think works best to draw attention to the word in question in a subtle, yet effective way?

If you really want something to stick out of your poster, use a change of color in combination with ***boldface***, which is very effective, but can be too much emphasis.

Color

When we

move on

further

down,

I find it

more and
more

difficult to

read this.

Contrast is important!

***Don't print similar
values of color on top
of each other.***

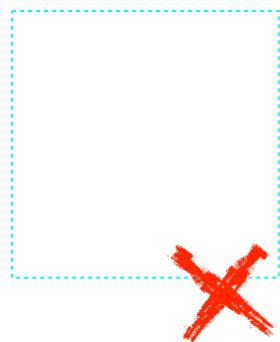
This is much better.

Contrast is important!

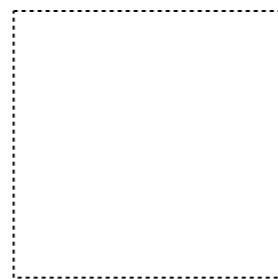
*Do not use reversed
out text on less than
50% tints.*

This is at 70%.

- Use white or light coloured background with black or dark colored text.
- stick to a scheme of 2–3 colors that are thematically linked.
Use a consistent pattern, e.g. *urea* and *water*.
- consider people who have problems differentiating colors (red/green)
<http://www.vischeck.com/>
- ensure that same colors come out the same: RGB ≠ CMYK
- Colored lines/text must be thicker!



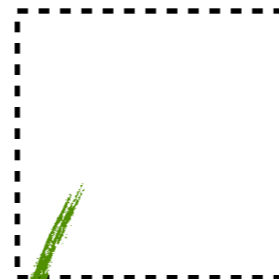
For reversed type you need a larger, bolder font to avoid having



ink spread into fine serifs and thin strokes. Therefore, choose



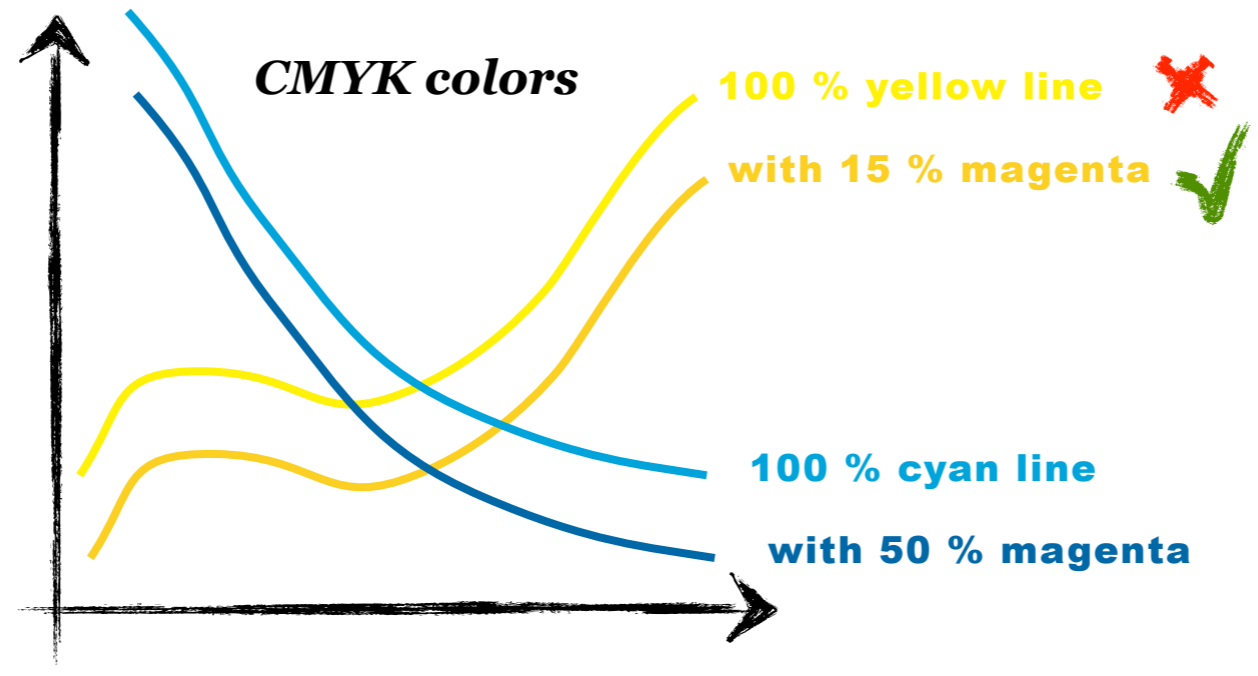
a sans serif font, make it bold and use increased spacing.



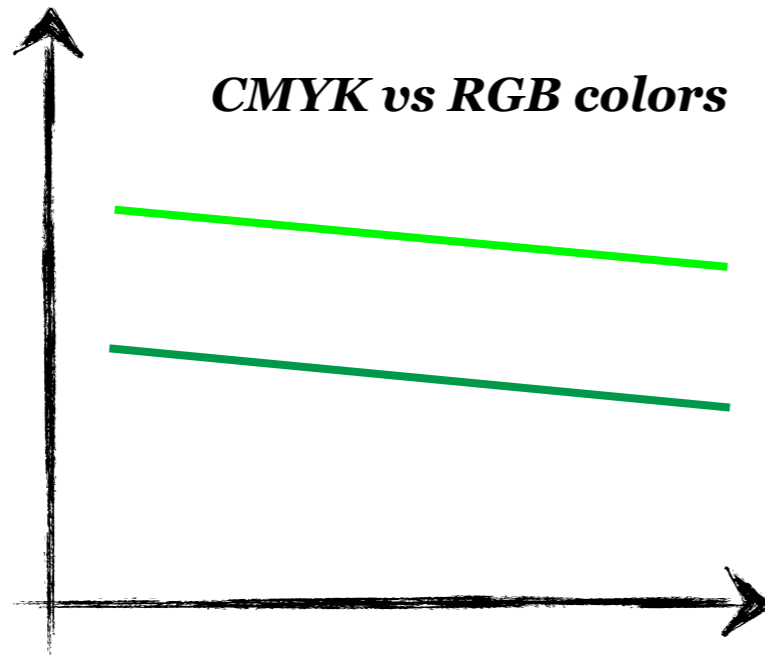
keep reversed type readable!

Do you really need a line?

Do you even need a background?



CMYK vs RGB colors



**RGB 100 % green,
will be 44 % cyan 63 % yellow in CMYK**

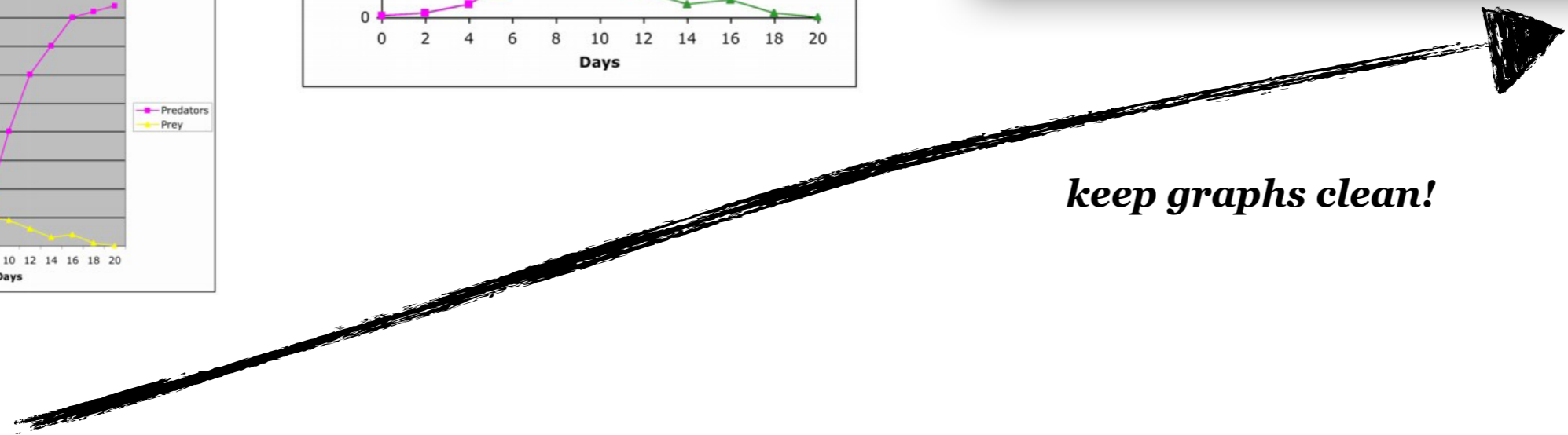
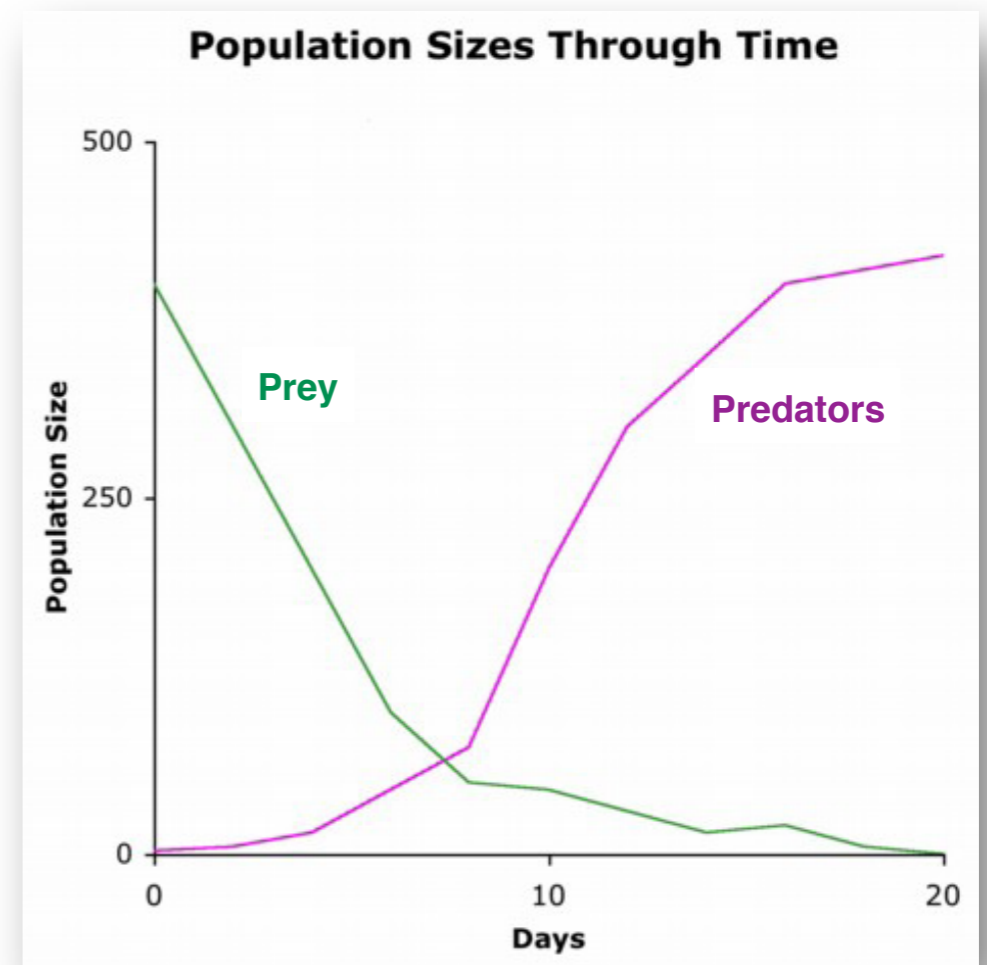
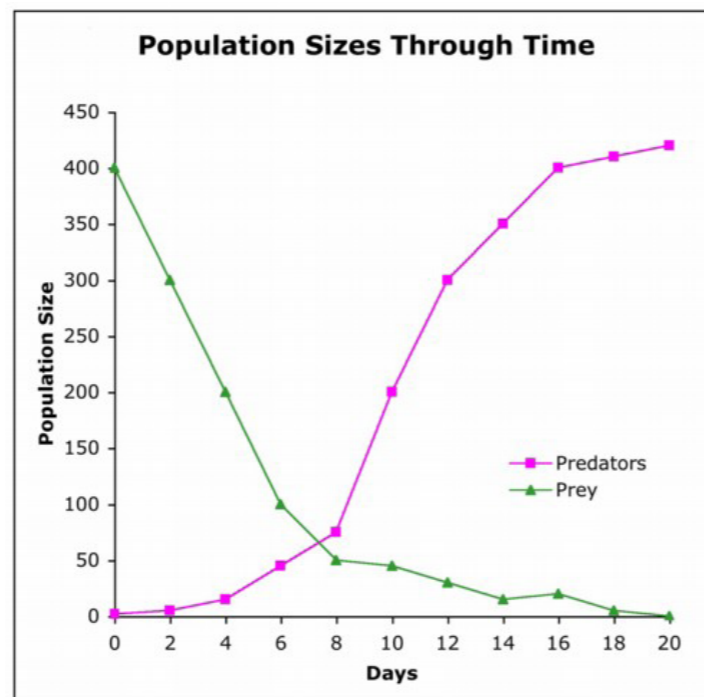
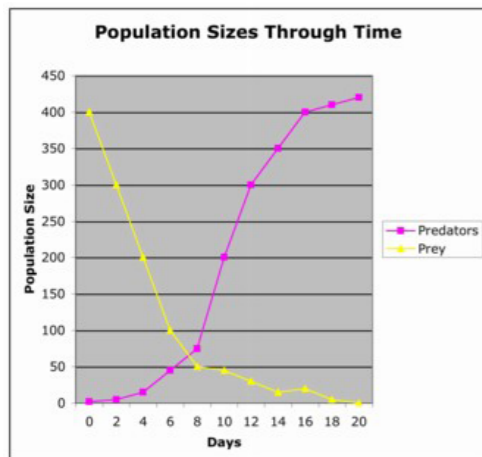
CMYK 100 % cyan 100 % yellow

Graphics

*Show the data,
tell the truth,
help the viewer think about the information
rather than the design,
encourage the eye to compare the data,
make large data sets coherent.^[1]*

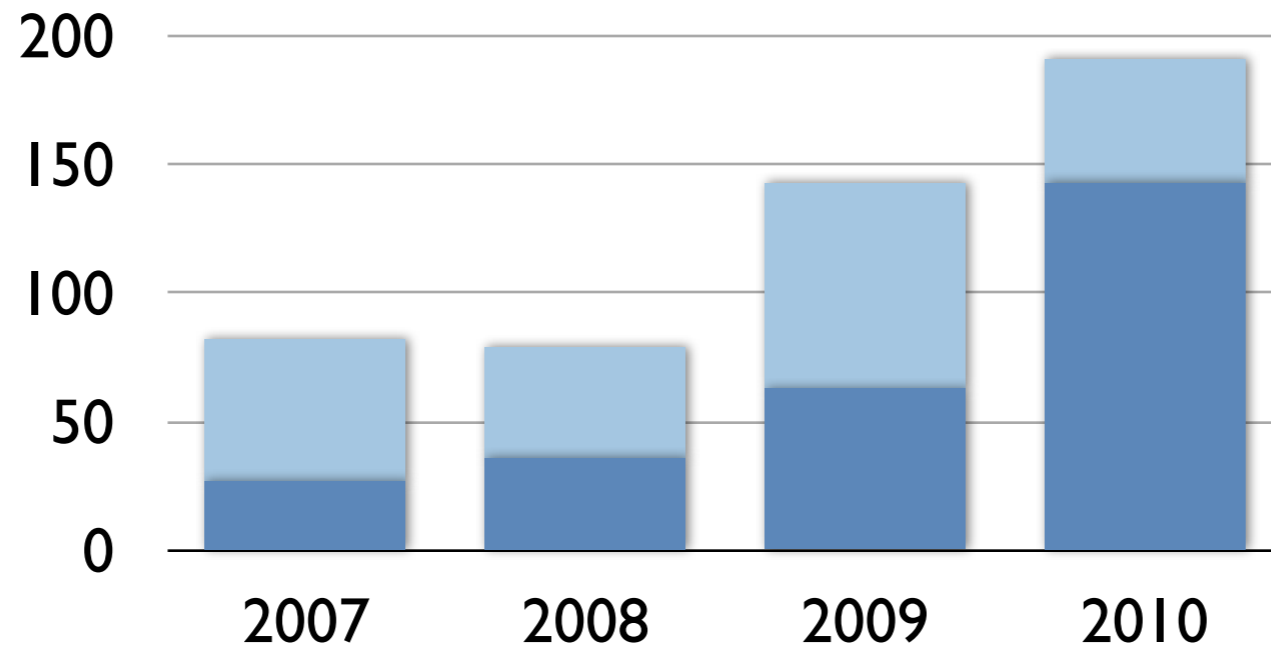
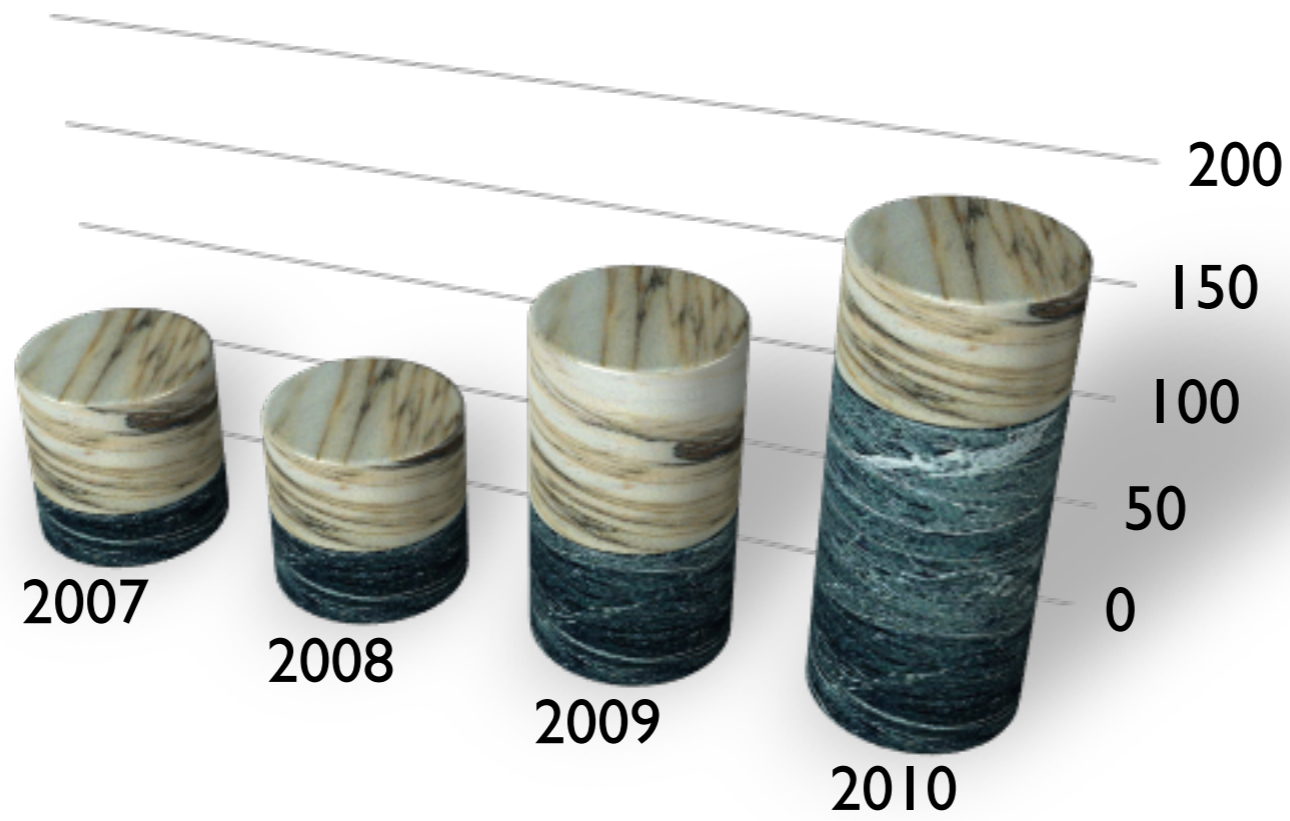
- *Every figure* should
 - have properly labelled axes (values & units),
 - have a clear, short legend,
 - be numbered in the order it appears in the text,
 - be near to the text explaining it.
- Use only high-quality graphics!

[1] Tufte, E. The Visual Display of Quantitative Information. Graphics Press, Cheshire, CT (1983)



keep graphs clean!

Avoid 3d presentation of 2d data



Tables

	AW	AW	AW	AW	AW	AW	
Pontypridd d	---	---	0519	---	---	---	
Trefforest d	---	---	0521	---	---	---	
Cathays d	---	---	0539	---	---	---	
Caerffili/Caerphilly d	---	---	---	---	0600	---	
Heol y Frenhines/ Cardiff Queen Street d	---	---	0544	---	0615	---	
Caerdydd Canolog/ Cardiff Central d	0515	0542	0550	0607	0625	0645	
Grangetown d	0519	0546	0554	0611	0629	0649	
Heol Dingle/Dingle Road d	---	---	---	---	---	0653	
Penarth a	---	---	---	---	---	0657	
Cogan d	0522	0549	0557	0614	0632	---	
Eastbrook d	0525	0552	0600	0617	0635	---	
Dinas Powys d	0527	0554	0602	0619	0637	---	
Tregatwg/Cadoxton d	0531	0558	0606	0623	0641	---	
Dociau'r Barri/Barry Dock d	0533	0600	0608	0625	0643	---	
Y Barri/Barry d	0537	0604	0612	0629	0647	---	
Ynys y Barri/Barry Island a	0542	0609	---	0634	0652	---	
Rhoose d	---	---	0618	---	---	---	
Llantwit Major d	---	---	0629	---	---	---	
Bridgend a	---	---	0643	---	---	---	

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Heol Dingle/Dingle Road d	---	---	---	---	---	0653	
Penarth a	---	---	---	---	---	0657	
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Rhoose d	---	---	0618	---	---	---	
Llantwit Major d	---	---	0629	---	---	---	
Bridgend a	---	---	0643	---	---	---	

- prefer graphs to tables
- if tables are needed, keep them simple
- units in top row!

1234567890 -> 1234567890

Typos

- **Why should you care?**

- A typo – *no problem!*
- Several typos – *still OK unless they corrupt information*
- Even more – *are you also sloppy with your science?*

- **Types of typos:**

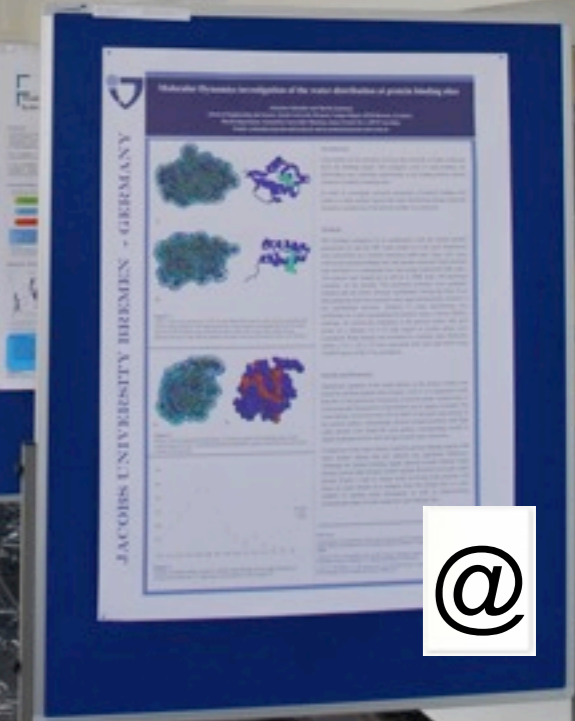
- Text typos – *Use a spell checker!*
- Typographic typos – *simple rules! (e.g. C. Bier, typokurz, 2006)*
 - $-12\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ – *small gap between number and unit, long minus - -*
 - $r = 15.5\text{ nm}$, force \mathbf{f} – *physical variables in italics (bold for vectors)*
 - hyphenation Berlin–Tokio 13–14 inches
nation

Printing

- don't print your poster on the last day before the conference
(when the printer queues are jammed with jobs of your colleagues)
- convert text to curves or export to PNG to not lose formatting
- save as PDF -> Reprostelle
- save as PS -> GWDG print queues (A4->A0 queue `lpr -P zcip4s62 poster.ps`)
- print A4/A3 version before and check

The poster session

- prepare a 3 min summary for the day of presentation
 - give the big picture,
 - explain why the problem is important,
 - show your findings with the help of your plots.
- create hand-outs with a summary and your contact information, or an URL where your research can be found, or a business card
- bring reprints of any of your own relevant papers



Resources

- Block, SM: *Do's and don'ts of poster presentations*
Biophys J 71 (1996)
- Erren, TC and Bourne, PE: *Ten Simple Rules for a Good Poster Presentation*
PLoS Comp Biol 3 (2007)
- Hess, GR, Tosney, K, Leigel, L: *Creating effective poster presentations: AMEE Guide no. 40*
Medical Teacher 31 (2009)
- Graphics: Helmut's Tech-Tea „How we do plots“ – Wiki
- Typography: Christian's Tech-Tea „Typography“ – Wiki
- Strizver, I: *Type rules*
Wiley (2010)
- Tufte, E: *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*
Graphics Press, Cheshire, CT (1983)