Poster layouts

In general, people expect information to flow left-to-right and top-to-bottom. Viewers are best able to absorb information from a poster with several columns that progress from left to right. Even within these columns, however, there are certain places where viewers’ eyes naturally fall first and where they expect to find information.

Imagine your poster with an upside-down triangle centred from the top to the bottom. It is in this general area that people tend to look first and is often used for the title, results, and conclusions. Secondary and supporting information tend to fall to the sides, with the lower right having the more minor information such as acknowledgements, references, and personal contact information.

1. **Main Focus Area**
   Location of research fundamentals: Title, Abstract, Results, Conclusion.

2. **Secondary Emphasis**
   Location of important info: Intro, Results, Summary

3. **Supporting Area**
   Location of supporting info: Methods, Discussion

4. **Final Info Area**
   Location of supplemental info: References, Acknowledgments, Personal information

Finding the ideal focal point

The rule of thirds states that if you take a canvas and divide it into three equally sized horizontal sections and three equally sized vertical sections, the resulting grid provides a sort of “roadmap” that helps you choose where to place your design elements. Think of your grid as a sort of map - the spots where the lines intersect indicate the prime focal areas within your design. Bringing an element closer to one of these intersections will allow it to stand out more, while objects that are further away will receive less attention.

![Rule of Thirds Diagram]

Audiences tend to follow a capital “F” shaped pattern with their eyes whenever they look at a design. The eye naturally starts at the top left section of the canvas, then moves down to the bottom left, back up to the top right, and then finally the bottom right.

The rule of thirds should act as a guideline that helps you achieve visual balance and interest. For example, an element in the top left part of the grid will seem nearly equal to an element that touches both the top right and bottom right intersections.

The rule of thirds grid gives you the chance to give your design a perfectly symmetrical appearance - but while it’s true that humans are naturally attracted to symmetry, it’s also the easiest way to go unnoticed because we’re used to seeing it all the time. Making something asymmetrical sends a signal to our brain that something is different, which makes us more likely to engage. You need to decide what might be best on the brief you have been given and your intended audience.