

Making a Small Poster with Word Processing Software

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One of the greatest difficulties students in the intermediate and junior high grades at my school have is doing research on the Internet. They certainly know how to use the Internet for their own purposes, but many do not have the skills or experience to find specific information needed for class projects on the Web.

In the past, I often had students share the results of their research in a PowerPoint presentation. These presentations took computer lab time to complete and even more time to properly present to classmates. Recently I have found that the same research results can be displayed on a small poster created in Microsoft Word or AppleWorks. These projects usually take only two weeks to complete - one lab period for research and one for completing the poster. The posters use short concise text that doesn't always have to be written in complete sentences, much like PowerPoint. They also teach students have to use color and graphics on their work. The finished posters can be hung on the wall or compiled into a book to share with other students. This way, students can spend more time researching topics on the Internet and less time in preparing a final project to share with others.

I have always prepared worksheets when asking students to do Internet research, especially in the intermediate grades. Having specific questions to answer seems to help students find relevant information on a Web site. The sheer volume of text on a typical Web page, often written with adult vocabulary, seems to overwhelm students who usually like the answer to be "right there" for them to record. Prepared questions help students to direct their attention to information they will need for their final project.

For my presentation today, I will give instructions on how to make a poster with word processing software. I will also give examples of my research worksheets and finished posters for you to use in your own classes. Once you learn how to make posters, you will find you can use them at almost every grade level and across all the curriculum areas.

How To Make A Poster in Microsoft Word

Almost the same procedure can be used to create posters in Appleworks. In Appleworks, the grid lines are already there for you!

Setting Up Your Document:

- Open a new Word document.
- Under **File** on the Menu Bar, select **Page Setup** and create 1" margins on the top and bottom, left and right sides of the page.
- Also under **Page Setup**, decide if your poster will have a **portrait or landscape** orientation.
- Under **View** on the Menu Bar, click on **Toolbars** and click on the **Drawing** toolbar. My drawing toolbar usually appears at the bottom of my open window.
- Click on the dropdown arrow after the word **Draw** and select **Grid**. In the new window that opens, under **Grid settings**, set the **horizontal and vertical spacing** to .5". You can set higher or lower numbers for the line spacing but just be sure the two numbers are the same so you will see square boxes on your grid.
- In the same window, be sure **Display grid lines on screen** is checked and that **Vertical every** and **Horizontal every** are both set to 1. The gridlines that you now see on your document will help you to place text and graphics exactly where you want them on your finished poster. Remember, however, to turn **Display grid lines on screen** off when you have finished your poster. If you don't turn the grid lines off, they will appear on all future Word documents and really confuse the next students to use the computers!

Using WordArt for Titles:

- One way to add a title to your poster is to use WordArt. Students like to use WordArt, and this kind of title is an easy way to add color and interest to the poster. The title can also be created with a regular font in a larger size.
- Click on **Insert** on the Menu Bar and select **Picture** and then **WordArt**.
- Click on the WordArt of your choice. The horizontal choices seem to work better on posters than the vertical choices.

- When you click **OK**, a new window appears where you can type the title of your poster. Finally, click **OK** and the title appears on your poster.
- WordArt on your poster can be moved by clicking and dragging on the text and can be sized by clicking and dragging on one of the corners.
- You can also add WordArt to your poster by clicking on the Insert WordArt icon on the drawing toolbar. It looks like a blue capital A standing on one leg only.

Designing the Poster Layout:

- There are three ways that I have used to begin posters with students.
 - Create a template with shapes already on the poster that students can open from the network.
 - Allow students time to create a layout with paper and pencil before they begin to work on the computer.
 - Let students dive in and create the poster as they go along. This seems to work as well, if not better, than the first two ideas!

Using the Drawing Toolbar to Put Objects on the Poster:

- I have found that rectangles and squares are the best shapes to use on posters. These shapes hold the most text. Students can use other AutoShapes sparingly to add visual interest to their work, but most AutoShapes do not hold much text. Since content gathered from research is the goal of the entire poster project, I prefer that they use rectangles and squares for their text boxes.
- I also use the rectangle tool instead of the text box tool on the Drawing toolbar. With the rectangle tool, I can get a better idea of what my finished poster will look like.
- Click on the rectangle tool on the Drawing toolbar.
- Place the crosshairs that appear on your document at the intersection of two grid lines and click and drag down and to the right to draw a box on your poster.
- Since the worksheet helps students know how many text boxes they will need, they can go ahead and draw a number of rectangles or squares on their poster at this point. The grid lines help to make the boxes the same size and to give symmetry to the poster.

- You can also add graphics - clip art or photographs - to your poster at this time or later in the process.
- Here's a quick review of how to move graphic objects once you have inserted them into your document. My students have a hard time remembering this process:
 - Click on the graphic. A black border with black square handles will appear around the graphic.
 - On the Menu Bar, select **Format** and then **Picture**.
 - In the new window on the **Layout** tab, select **Tight** and then **OK**.
 - The black border will disappear and instead you will see small round circles around your picture.
 - The picture can now be moved by clicking and dragging and can be sized by clicking and dragging on one of the corners.
 - You can also right click on the graphic to begin this process.

Formatting AutoShapes on the Poster:

- To add text to a shape, right click in the shape and select **Add Text** from the dropdown menu.
- You can now use all the text formatting tools that are available whenever working with text in Word.
- If you want to want to change the formatting after you have entered text into the box, click on the box and then click on the border. The border changes from little lines to little dots and you can make any changes to any text in this box without having to select the text.
- To change the color of your font, click on the Font Color icon on the Drawing toolbar. It looks like a capital letter A with a line under it. . Click on the dropdown arrow beside the letter A to view the colors available and choose the color you like.
- To add color to the outlines of your shapes, use the Drawing tool bar. You can add color when your first create the shape (before inserting text) or after text has been entered. Either way, click in the shape to begin.

- To add dimension to the shape outline, click on the **Line style** icon on the Drawing toolbar. Click on the width you prefer. I like solid black 6 pt.
- To add color to your line, click on the Line Color icon. It looks like a paint brush. Click on the dropdown arrow beside the paint brush to view the colors available and choose the color you like.
- To fill the shape with color, click on Fill Color icon. This looks like a paint can. Again, click on the dropdown arrow beside the paint can to view the colors available and choose the color you like. Remember, shapes that are filled with a background color use a lot of ink to print! I encourage students to use this feature only at home!

Finishing the Poster:

- When text and graphics have all been added to the poster, students can use **Print Preview** on the **File** menu to see how their final project will look.
- A better way to look at the poster is to change the view of the document on the Menu Bar. By using **View**, students can still make final changes in how their poster looks. In **Print Preview**, you cannot make changes to your text.
 - On the Menu Bar, click on **View** and then **Zoom**.
 - In the new window that opens, change the percent to 50.
 - You should now be able to see your entire poster and can make minor changes in size and position of objects on the page.
- One of any teacher's hardest jobs is to get students to put their names on their work! Students can create a separate text box for their names on the poster or they can put their name in the footer area in the margin of the poster.
 - On the Menu Bar click on **View** and then choose **Header and Footer**.
 - On the bottom of your document, type your name (and the date if you want it on the poster) in the footer area. You can choose a

small font for this information so it doesn't detract from the overall look of your poster.

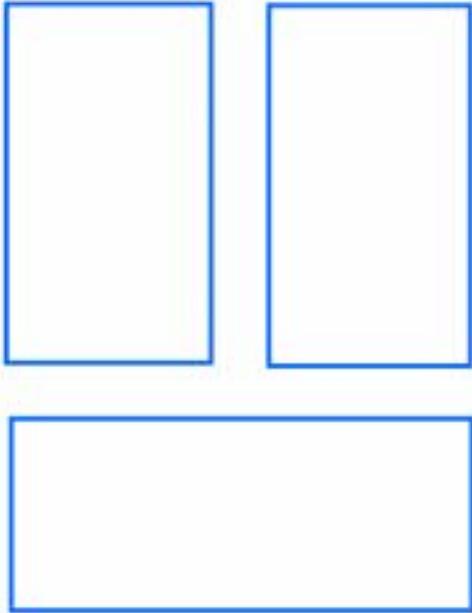
- You can use the header area for name and date if you prefer.

Some Extra Information

- The credit for this poster idea goes to my friend, Jordan Schad. Jordan is the music teacher and also teaches eighth grade social studies at St. William School in Cincinnati. Jordan is a whiz with computers and really knows how to inspire her students to do their best work - on the computer and in the classroom.
- This idea of using a word processing program to produce posters is really just a beginning to learning how to make posters on one PowerPoint slide. My son John is working on his PhD in speech therapy at the University of Wisconsin. He and his colleagues prepare posters with the results of their research studies. The posters are composed on one PowerPoint slide and then printed by the University in a large size. The laminated poster can be rolled up in a tube and carried on the airplane for travel to a conference. At poster sessions at the conference, researchers have the opportunity to share their work with others in the profession and to get immediate feedback on a one-to-one basis.
- A good article about how a middle school teacher used posters prepared in PowerPoint with his students can be found if you Google **Student Poster Sessions**. You will find a link to an article by Eric Baumgartner. This article first appeared in *The Science Teacher*, March, 2004.
- You can also Google **PowerPoint Posters** to find more information on this topic.
- Please email me at ehelmann@fuse.net if you have any questions or I also try to put my lesson plans on my Web site www.mrsheilmann.com, under **Technology** and then **Lab Lessons**. Use anything you can. I love it when teachers share!

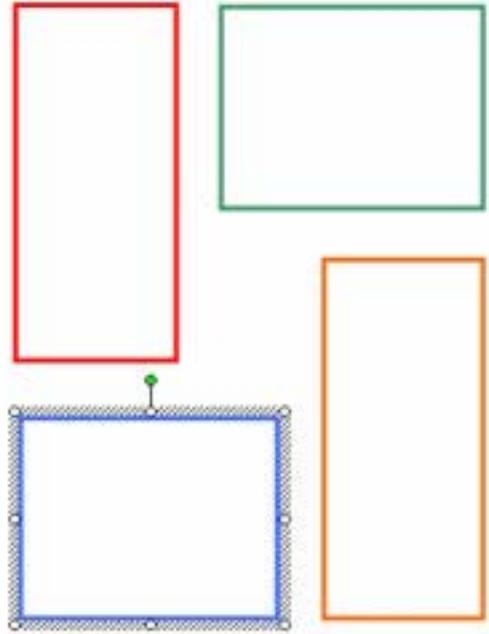
Three Space Poster

By Mrs. Heilmann

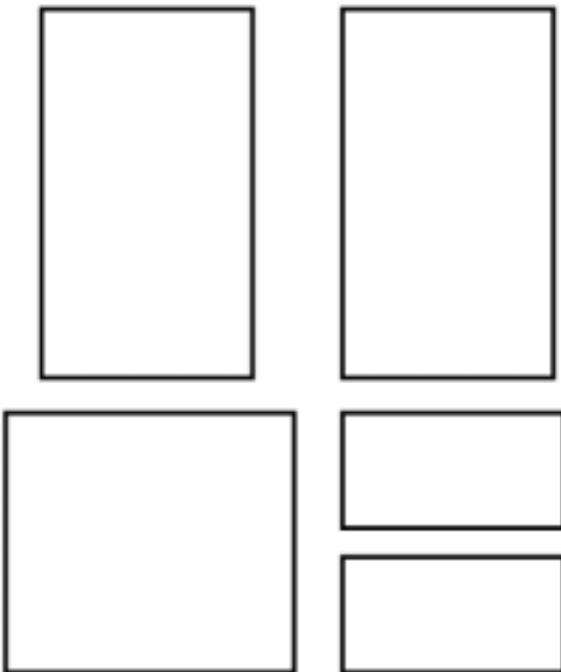


Four Space Poster

By Mrs. Heilmann



5 Space Poster



6 Space Poster

