



How to Prepare a Perfectly Putrid Poster

To those who are weary of the same hackneyed old methods of confusing an audience that are now commonly employed in oral presentations, the growth of poster presentations has presented new and exciting opportunities in disinformation technology. It is one thing to cause the signal to noise ratio of an essentially serial, narrow-bandwidth oral presentation to go to zero by such simple methods as showing illegible slides at 5-s intervals while mumbling inaudibly. It is quite another thing, and a much greater challenge, to obfuscate completely a wide-band broadcast mode poster presentation at 4 feet (1.2 m). It is really not easy to fool all of the people all of the time; it requires a significant entropy rise (the availability of beer is an asset).

We feel sure that the ingenuity of geophysicists will rise to the demand, and we can hope to see some truly awful posters, far in advance of the few merely curious specimens that have been available so far. We do not believe for one moment that the suggestions listed below are anything other than mere linear operations, and we realize that they leave the door open to many more sophisticated approaches. However, they are simple to effect and if applied consistently will provide a good basis at least for reducing the information content of the paper to zero, if not actually creating disinformation. Advances we leave to those more skilled in signal processing and more devoid of humanitarian concerns.

Do not follow the mundane practice of placing the title of the paper prominently at the top of the poster board. This would let people identify your paper much too easily. Use some creativity: Surely you can think of a really good place to hide the title!

Do not make the lettering so large that it can be read from 2 meters away. People should have to stand on top of the poster or one another if they are *really* interested. Moreover, this close proximity makes for more interesting social contacts.

Do not double-space the text. Use the smallest type that you can find and put as many words on a page as possible. This will keep interested parties riveted to your board. Be very careful to keep diagrams or illustrations as small as possible (preferably requiring the use of a hand lens) to make space for more typed sheets on the board.

Do not organize the paper so that it is self-explanatory. Start at the bottom right corner so that you can have a good laugh at everyone's total confusion. Besides, they will remember more of the material later if they have to do some of the research themselves!

Do not label elements 1, 2, 3, or A, B, C. This will make it much too easy for a viewer to figure out your paper. Imaginative labelling of elements in your poster will ensure that viewers won't hurry on to another one.

Do not highlight the authors' names and affiliations. Surely you want to be as obscure as possible: Immodesty is *so* unbecoming.

Do not explain the poster logically to anyone asking for more information, or give them the background first, followed by the results and then the conclusions. This could create the erroneous impression that you are perfectly willing to explain yourself to anyone who asks, which is certainly not what we are after. After all, a researcher is not just *anyone*!

Remember, you can make a Perfectly Putrid Poster just as easily as you gave a Truly Terrible Talk!

