




# Poster Printing Guide for Students

## Using Student Computing Services' Large-Format Printer

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 =Shortcut  =Advice  =Caution

### Introduction

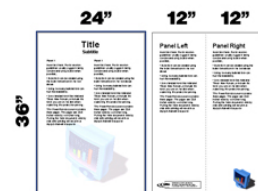
Creating documents for and printing to the HP DesignJet printer in the SCS Lab is not particularly difficult. But due to the high cost of paper and ink and considering that SCS does not charge students for this service, trial-and-error printing is **not** something we can afford to do. We need to take all reasonable steps to insure that the first print is acceptable. To that end, we have developed the following guidelines and procedures.




**Only** academic posters may be printed. If your poster is not in fulfillment of a class assignment or some other faculty-supported project, printing must be approved by the SCS lab manager or another OTS professional.

### Use an SCS Template for a Fast Start

The poster templates available on the SCS Resources page are preconfigured for the SCS DesignJet printer; open <http://www.towson.edu/scs>, click the **Self-Help Resources** link in the gray area on the left. The available templates are all PowerPoint and Publisher files. For many users, PowerPoint makes a familiar and flexible design and layout tool for large documents; Publisher is even better if you know it or are willing to learn it. Either way, using a template will allow you to bypass the set-up tedium and start creating your masterpiece right away!



 If a poster in a format other than PowerPoint or Publisher does not print satisfactorily the first time for inexplicable reasons, SCS reserves the right to postpone reprinting until a professional staff member can be consulted.

If you want to mount your poster on a presentation board, acquire the board before you create the poster so that you can size your document appropriately. A popular (and economical) three-panel presentation board composed of a 24"x36" center panel and two 12"x36" side panels is available at the University Store (UU) and local office supply shops. The SCS Web site includes a template for this type of board.

### Develop Your Poster

**A Worthy Width:** The SCS DesignJet prints to a 24-inch wide roll of paper; posters narrower than 24 inches will require trimming. SCS is not specially equipped for large-format trimming, but we can help you add guides to your poster for manual trimming. If you use an SCS template or otherwise set your width to 24 inches, trimming will be unnecessary.

**Breathing Room for the Eyes:** Regardless of its size, a page filled to overflowing with text content is hard on the eyes. Good design makes effective use of **white space**, the *empty* areas of the page. The following general steps may serve as a useful guide:

1. Edit your text down to the essential information *before* composing your poster. The longer argument is not necessarily the stronger argument. Further, eleventh-hour text edits can wreak havoc with an otherwise solid design.



2. Set page margins to at least one inch. Margins of less than one inch will make your poster look overcrowded and you audience feel claustrophobic.
3. Leave at least one inch of space between columns of text.
4. If possible, increase the line spacing (leading) of your text. Often, smaller text with greater line spacing is easier to read the larger text with lesser line spacing. Say *that* ten times fast!

**Contrast is King:** If the color of your text is similar to the color of the background on which you place it, your text may be difficult to read. Contrast—the difference between the lightest and darkest areas—is an important consideration. As a rule, if your text is difficult to read on your computer monitor, it will be even more so on paper.

**Hi Res, It's Nice to See You:** An image's resolution value is a measure of the amount of detail in the image. As a rule, the higher the resolution, the greater the available detail, the higher the image quality. High resolution (hi-res) images usually make for better looking posters. When selecting images, look for resolution values in the 200-300 dpi range. Images copied from Web pages—typically 72-96 dpi—may appear jagged and fuzzy when enlarged. Many clipart images, such as those available via PowerPoint's or Publisher's **Insert > Pictures** menu, are resolution-independent and will remain sharp at any size.

**Call Ahead, We've Got Some Good Ones:** Poster printing in the SCS Lab may only be done with staff assistance. For your own convenience, we recommend that you allow at least 30-minutes for printing. Many SCS staffers are well prepared to assist you.


**Some Like it Dry:** The SCS poster printer uses inkjet technology. Consequently, your poster will be particularly susceptible to the ravages of moisture. To play it safe, consider bringing a large plastic bag (e.g., trash or leaf bag) to your printing appointment so that you can safely transport your poster regardless of the weather conditions.

## Meet with an SCS Staffer

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When you visit the SCS Lab (CK-35) to print, a staff member will preview your poster and run through a brief checklist to make sure:

- The printer is ready and there is adequate paper and ink for your job
- The dimensions of your poster are appropriate for the printer
- There is no critical content within the half-inch non-printing border region of the poster
- There are no graphical conflicts, such as obscured text or inadequate contrast between text and background.

 SCS may offer constructive criticism as well as technical advice. While you are not obliged to revise your poster, SCS is likewise not obliged to reprint your poster if your disregard for our **technical** advice results in an unsatisfactory print.

## Printing and the Aftermath

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Once we have addressed any potential problems, SCS will print your poster from one of the computers at the Service Desk. Once printing stops, the poster may hang on the printer for a couple of minutes to allow the ink to dry before it cuts the print from the roll. Patience is a virtue; be virtuous. Once the printer cuts the page loose, SCS will *carefully* remove it from the output bin and lay it on a table for your review. From this point on, the poster is in your hands. Keep it dry, avoid folding or creasing it, and enjoy the larger-than-life presentation of your hard work.