FEATURES THAT MAKE A POSTER LOOK PROFESSIONAL
BIOL 302 - LA Gosselin

Here are a few tips that will help you create a visually attractive, professional-looking poster.

-Symmetry: arrange the elements in your poster (main title, blocks of text, photos, graphs) symmetrically. In other words, as much as possible, position the elements so that the left and right sides of your poster are balanced, and to some extent the top and bottom as well.

-Clean, straight lines: make sure all edges (e.g. of a graph, photo, block of text) are perfectly straight and aligned with other elements above and below.

-Font size: the main title should be printed in the largest font size so that it stands out. Section titles should be larger than the body of the text, or at least bolded and/or underlined so that they stand out from the body of the text. The main body of the text should definitely be larger than 12 pt font size - large enough to easily read from about 1.5 - 2 m away. The "Literature cited" section, at the end of the poster, can be printed in smaller font size.

-Font types: don't change font types in your poster. Choose a font type that is clean and formal (e.g. Times New Roman, Palatino, Arial), and use that same font type for all text in the poster.

-Graphs: create your own graphs and use colour. Don't just copy or scan a graph or table from a research article; get the values from the graphs and create your own (e.g. in SigmaPlot). Also, use black for the axes and labels, but colour for the data (symbols, lines, bars). Colour graphs are visually much more appealing than black & white, but don't use too many colours: 1-3 colours work best.

-Tables: a table should only be included in a poster if the data really do not lend themselves to being presented in graph format (ideally, present all data in graph format if possible). Even then, however, tables must be kept as simple as possible so that they can be very easily read and understood.

-Use of colours: the use of colours in a poster (background, photos, graphs, titles) can make the poster much more appealing than it would be if all in black and white. However, choose your colours appropriately. Your poster should not look like a flower or an impressionist painting. Choose only a few colours for text, graphs and lines (e.g. no more than 3-4 colours in the poster). Also, use colours that are more formal (so, pink and neon purple might not be a good choice). Finally, choose colours that go well together and provide good contrast; for example, yellow on dark blue or dark green, dark blue on white, black on yellow. Avoid poor contrasts, such as placing a photo of a green forest on a green background, or a photo of the ocean on a blue background.