Top 10 things to remember when creating poster presentations

1. **Never use pre-set templates or pre-set text boxes.**
   - Pre-set templates almost always limit the usable space on a slide and do little to enhance the presentation. Instead of this, start with a blank slide and then add your own background image and insert your own text boxes.
   - Pre-set text boxes are automatically set to reduce the size of the font to allow it to fit in the pre-set space. This can send a very misleading message. For example, in a presentation about vitamins, if on one slide you have a little information about vitamin A the font may end up being a size 20 but if on the next slide you have more information about vitamin C, the font may default to size 12 making it appear like it was less important than the text for vitamin A.
2. **Never include any paragraphs, or even long sentences.**
   - No one will read those. This should never be looked at as the type of poster that is permanently hung up in a medical college or at a professional conference. This visual presentation is supposed to be an outline for the student to present with.
3. **Use the (vertical) "line spacing" to visually support the organization of the content.**
   - Sub-bullets should be closer (vertically) to each other and to the main bullet that they are supposed to be "connected" to and a bit further away from the next main bullet below them.
   - Basic steps:
     - Highlight a set of bulleted text.
       - Fact 1 blah blah…
       - Fact 2 blah blah…
       - Fact 3 blah blah…
     - Bring up the menu and click on "paragraph" then "line spacing" and then add approx. a size 6-12 spacing "after".
     - This will spread the bullets out vertically so that they are not so squished (vertically).
     - You may have to uncheck "Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style".
     - You may also have to add more spacing "after" the final sub-bullet so that there is more room between it and the next main bullet.
4. **Sub-bullets should be a smaller font than the main bullet**
   - This allows the viewer to easily understand that this is information that is under the "umbrella" of the main bullet. The visual clarity will help a lot in the hierarchy of your presentation.
5. **Never break up ideas across a line break and try to never have just one word on a line by itself.**
   - People read in chunks so it is essential that you don't break up ideas just because the space on a line runs out. It is also important not to "waste" a line on just one word.
   - Basic steps:
     - Do NOT use the space bar. Instead, you can just hit "enter" and push the first word of this idea down to the next line.
     - If that causes a double-spaced line or other formatting issues then just hit "shift" + "enter" to push that first word to the next line.
     - You can also line up bullets and sub-bullets by highlighting them and sliding the "pointers" on the top ruler
   - An additional tool to help with this may be to stretch the text box a bit wider or change the margins of the text box
6. **Never include any logos, QR codes or names of specific people or places (mentor, teacher, lab assistant, location of research, etc.)**
   - These are all not allowed by most regional and/or state science fairs and are certainly against the rules at all ISEF events.

7. **All sections on poster, other than "Future Research" must be in past tense**

8. **Never include your abstract as a part of your poster**
    - In most ISEF-affiliated and JSHS-affiliated competitions, the abstract on the official form must be displayed, typically in a frame on the table. However, no other form of the abstract is allowed.
    - While you are allowed to display the abstract on the official form on the poster, it is truly a waste of valuable space.

9. **Cite every picture, data chart, figure with a full citation (URL)**
    - If a picture was found on the internet, then the full website address must be listed in a small font below.
    - If a picture was taken by the student, then list "photo by (first initial last name)".
    - If a picture was taken by someone else, then you must have written consent to use it in this setting.
    - If a picture was taken that shows the face of another person, then you must have their photo consent or blur out/cover their face.
    - If a data chart or figure was created by the student then list that in the citation. This is even the case in the results section when displaying data from the student's actual project.
    - If a data chart or figure comes from another source (ex. prev. research) then cite it fully directly below.

10. **Match the main section titles to a standard science fair rubric (scientific method)**
    - Introduction & Background
        - Explain the general info./background using bulleted text and pictures.
    - Review of Literature
        - Explain how previous research led to a gap in knowledge (problem statement).
        - List the "Goals" and "Findings" of 2-3 previous research articles and cite the article fully directly above the bulleted notes.
    - Problem Statements / Goals / Hypotheses
        - Briefly explain the Problem Statement (gap in current knowledge)
        - Briefly explain the Goals (Objectives, Purpose) and how they addressed the Problem Statement
        - List at least 1 hypothesis per goal (match them by number to the goals) and justify why it was believed that would be the outcome.
        - Choose whichever word matches your rubric, Goal vs Objective vs Purpose and Problem vs Gap.
        - Only include "Research Question" if that is on your rubric. If you do, then it must replace one of the above
    - Methods / Materials
        - Briefly explain how this unique approach/concept was inspired and/or developed
        - Explain the difference between the role of the student and the role of the mentor
        - Clear, sequential plan as to how the methods addressed the goals, "This was done in order to…".
        - Include Graphics/Pictures/Flow Charts to help teach the methodology.
        - List and explain controls and variables
        - If a survey was used, list sample questions and how they helped to address the problem
    - Results / Analysis / Discussion
        - Combine these sections to help explain what the results showed in relation to the original goals.
        - Data should be represented using charts, tables, graphics that include descriptive titles, labeled axis and clear, explanatory captions.
        - Explain how the data/observations were analyzed including what tests (lab tests and/or statistical tests) were used and why
        - Review whether the results supported or refuted the hypothesis(es)
    - Application
        - Essential to list the possible applications or implications of the research
    - Conclusion
        - Instead of a summary paragraph, consider listing bulleted text reviewing the goal, the methods, the findings and the application/importance
    - Future Research