

# HOW TO SUMMARIZE INFORMATION FOR A POSTER

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*Primary Care Faculty Development Fellowship Program*

## INTRODUCTION

To summarize information means to take a large selection of text and reduce it to its bare essentials. Bare essentials means the least information needed to understand the topic. This is information that is essential and relevant, such as preconditions (something that must exist or happen before something else can exist or happen) and data essential for interpretation. Nice-to-know information that is not essential includes detailed descriptions, explanation of common knowledge, and background information that does not lead directly to the reason for the project.

## WHY SUMMARIZE?

There are several reasons to present only the bare essentials on a poster; you have only a small amount of space on a poster, and only a small amount of time to attract readers to your poster. When you present a poster at a conference, your poster is one of many posters packed into a room. Potential readers have sometimes hundreds of posters to choose from, and usually only an hour or two to read them all, or only a few minutes to choose a one or two. To make your poster stand out and invite people to stop and read it, it must:

- be clear what the project is
- look interesting and
- look like it could be understood in a few minutes

## HOW TO SUMMARIZE

Here are some ideas for how to accomplish this by presenting only the highlights of your project by summarizing information.

### Idea #1: Type of Information to Include

The kind of information you should include in a poster depends on what type of project you are presenting.

- A research poster should provide the information called for in the IMRAD format: **I**ntroduction, **M**ethods, **R**esults and **D**iscussion.
- A curriculum development poster should provide similar information, but should follow the IDCRD format: **I**ntroduction, **D**evelopment process, **C**urriculum description, **R**esults and **D**iscussion. These are described in the handbook for the *Presenting a Scientific Presentation* session given during the March on-campus week of the Fellowship.

### Idea #2: Use Your Oral Presentation Slides

If you have already summarized information for your oral presentation, you can use your slides as a starting point. You may need to delete or add information for the poster, but this will give you something to work from.

### Idea #3: Summarize Highlights from Memory

Another idea is to write **from memory** and **in your own** words what your project is about. This idea works because the highlights are what you are most likely to remember. You can then flesh this out if you need to by looking through your slides and other project documentation.

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## Idea #4: Rules for Summarizing

Here are rules to guide you when summarizing information:

RULE	ORIGINAL TEXT	SUMMARIZED TEXT
<p>1. Delete trivia, details, redundancy and non-crucial words such as articles (“a” and “the”), adjectives, adverbs and obvious verbs.</p> <p>2. Integrate information across paragraphs and paraphrase in order to condense information.</p> <p>3. Use bullets to set off summarized text.</p> <p><b>(Bold words in the original text at the right indicate text retained in the summary.)</b></p>	<p><i>[Introduction: Review of the Literature]</i></p> <p><b>Overweight and obesity</b> problems have become a <b>global epidemic</b> and all the physicians irrespective of specialty encounter this problem on a regular basis. Family physicians particularly deal with this problem early and are in a position to make a significant impact, as they are able to manage patients from birth to death. Statistics show that this problem is growing significantly and if not addressed appropriately and thoroughly will increase the <b>burden on health industry</b>.</p> <p>Currently it is noted that approximately <b>2/3</b> of Americans are <b>overweight</b> with half of them being <b>obese</b>. Therefore, <b>educating</b> family medicine <b>residents</b> in this area is <b>important</b> to make them comfortable managing overweight and obesity problems before it can affect patients’ health significantly. The national project, Healthy People 2010, recognizes that physicians will need to be prepared to provide populations based preventive health care as well as medical care to their patients.</p> <p>Because overweight/obesity affects such a large percentage of the population and poses consequential health risks, it is important that physicians treat these conditions. Such treatment, however, is <b>not commonly implemented</b>, despite evidence that <b>physician counseling and management</b> of obesity treatment can be <b>effective</b> in helping these patients undertake and sustain weight management programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overweight and obesity a global epidemic</li> <li>• 2/3 US population overweight or obese</li> <li>• Financial burden on health industry</li> <li>• Modest weight loss improves health risk <i>[from a different section of the Introduction]</i></li> <li>• Physician counseling and management of obesity effective but not often implemented</li> <li>• Educating residents important</li> </ul>

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RULE	ORIGINAL TEXT	SUMMARIZED TEXT
<p>4. Generalize by categorizing like items or actions. If there are lists of items or events, decide if each item is important in its own right. If it isn't, think of one main heading or word for this information, instead of listing each item or event.</p> <p>You might want to include the entire list if the subject of the poster is performing a needs assessment or if you need to establish the validity of the need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrote a survey</li> <li>• Send survey to all faculty</li> <li>• Categorized and tallied survey results</li> <li>• Ran a focus group of students</li> <li>• Analyzed results</li> </ul>	<p>Performed a needs assessment</p>
<p>5. If an important list is given in sentence form, put each item on a separate line with a bullet in front of it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence suggests that physician counseling and management of obesity treatment can be effective, yet the majority of patients with these problems are not given appropriate management.</li> <li>• Lack of provider knowledge, attitudes, lack of skills, time management and lack of insurance coverage seemed to be some of the major reasons for this.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of patients lack appropriate management:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of provider knowledge, skills, time management</li> <li>- Provider attitudes</li> <li>- Lack of insurance coverage</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### References

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