

The Poster Making Process, Using Illustrator CS

Please read the PDF file “makingposters.pdf” which you can download from the Poster Help page of the OEA web site.

Link: <http://oea.cs.utexas.edu/posterhelp.shtml>

Link for making posters: <http://oea.cs.utexas.edu/pdfs/makingposters.pdf>

Link for this document: <http://oea.cs.utexas.edu/pdfs/illustratorcs.pdf>

Process Overview

1. **Decide on the final size you wish your poster to be.** Most posters made by UT CS are either 30” x 40” or 20” x 30.” The larger ones are usually taken to conferences, the smaller ones used at GradFest. **Set up your Illustrator file at exact size (100% scale)** when you open it up, and select either portrait or landscape dimensions. You do make it smaller, but it is easier to work larger.
2. **Design your artwork with that size and the proper dimensions in mind at either a 3x4 or 2x3 ratio.** See Making Posters for more details.
3. **Sketch out a detailed drawing of your poster before you begin.** Assign sizes to the various elements, taking into consideration an unprinted area of the paper that is at least .5” on all sides.
4. **Decide on exact sizes for each element and which elements you plan to use.** These would include photos, logos, text blocks, charts, illustration and graphs. When you determine the size of a graph, be sure to include in that size the heading and key.
5. **Decide on a color scheme before you start, even though you may want to modify it as you work.** You can download a UT swatch palette file from the PosterHelp page if you want to use the UT color palette. You can transfer these swatches into your document be either navigating to the file for that document and opening it up as a Swatch Library (detailed directions in Making Posters) or by dragging either the swatches themselves or the colored boxes into your new document. If you do that, the swatches will appear in the default Swatch palette of your new document. (See Making Posters on using color.) You can also start with the swatch library file and rename it and size it. That will put them into your palette.
6. **Make all the parts of the poster separately before you combine them into a larger file.** There are several reasons to do this. One is to make working on the big file easier and less confusing. Another is to make doing the charts easier. Another reason is to use text editing programs or spreadsheets as you normally would. You can do all of this in Illustrator, but it is probably more efficient to use other, familiar programs such as Word to write the text.
7. **The elements you can assemble before you make the big document are:**
 - a. **Text, from a text editor.** Each block of type can be in a different file (easiest way), but you can cut and paste sections from one document, too.
 - b. **Vector charts and graphics.** These can be made in Illustrator or some other program and imported into Illustrator. They should be at the dimensions you established in step 4. Even graphs made in Illustrator should be originally made as separate files because the undo command doesn’t work in graphing mode, and when you cut and paste one Illustrator graphic into another Illustrator file, you will lose the layers needed to easily edit the graphic. This way, should you need to change something, you can still do it in the original file, can easily put the graphic into other documents, and keep your main document less complex (fewer layers).
 - c. **Photos and pixelated images.** These images need to be produced with enough resolution to look good at 100% scale – 150 DPI on uncoated stock, 300 DPI on coated stock. The default resolution for the poster printer on Illustrator files is 300DPI for images and graphics, and 600 dpi for text.
 - d. **Set up the file the correct size, add layers and work out your color palette.**
 - e. **Using the layers palette, add a layer for each element including a background if there is to be one.** Window (menu)→ Layers. This brings up the Layers palette. Click on small black arrow at top right to bring up the options. Select “New Layer.” When that window opens, type in the name for each different object you are planning to add to the document. IE: Graph A, Graph B, Graph C, Headline, Copy block 1, Copy block 2, etc.
 - f. **Keep each object (or group of objects) on its/ their own layer** so you can deal with each object separately. You can choose whether to view or hide the layer by toggling the “eye” icon. When the eye is gone, the layer is invisible, but it still remains in the document. You must drag the layer to the trash, or choose delete layer to get rid of it from the file.
 - g. **To move an item from layer to another,** select the item (or grouped object) with the appropriate selection tool (see Selection Tools below). In the Layers palette (under

- Windows (menu) → Layers), you will see a small colored square (the color of that layer) on the right side. Move the little dot to the correct layer and your object will move.
- h. **To change the stacking order of layers**, select the name of the layer in the layers object and move it up or down the list. The closer to the top of the layers palette the layer is, the higher it is stacked in the document. Backgrounds will be at the bottom.
 - i. **To duplicate a layer, drag it to the bottom of the layers palette onto the icon that looks like a document with a turned down page.** That will copy it into the palette.
 - j. **Develop your color palette so you can easily get to the colors you need.** There are many different color palettes, we suggest using Pantone coated or uncoated spot in your documents. The Pantone Matching System (PMS) is used by commercial printers.
8. **Using the three selection tools.** There are three selection tools found on the top row of the Tools palette. They include the black arrow (the Selection Tool), the white arrow (the Direct Selection tool), and the white arrow with a plus beside it (the Group Selection Tool). The Group selection tool toggles with the Direct Selection tool. They all select different things.
- a. The black arrow (main Selection Tool) selects all grouped objects. This is good for selecting text.
 - b. The white arrow (Direct Selection Tool) selects only a segment of a grouped object. Use it for modifying the shape of an object.
 - c. The white arrow with the + (Group Selectin Tool) selects only grouped objects. Use this if you had a graphic made of 10 grouped objects. With this tool, you could select one of those objects and move it without changing the position of the others.
9. **Using Type.**
- a. There are several ways to use type in Illustrator. You can type directly in the program. This is advisable when putting in a headline or labeling a graphic. You can also import type from a text editor.
 - i. **To cut and paste type into Illustrator**, draw a text box with the text tool. Then Cut and paste the text into the box by clicking inside the box.
 - ii. **To import from a text file**, go to File (menu) → Place. Navigate to the file and select it. You can do some text editing inside the program, including spell checks.
 - iii. **To check spelling** go to: Edit (menu) → Check Spelling (or command I—Mac).
 - iv. **To change colors, font and size**, highlight the actual text with the text tool or click on the text box to select it, and then make changes.
 - v. **To add an effect such as a drop shadow**, make sure you have loaded your plug-ins. Using the text tool (T) select the type and go to Filter (menu) → Stylize → Drop shadow. Select the color and specifications for the drop shadow.
 - vi. **Using text is very self-explanatory.** You can use the drop down menus, type and paragraph palettes (bring up with command T) or some keyboard commands. In the palette you can change the size, leading (space between lines), kerning (space between letters), and show the font in various ways—caps and lower case, all caps, caps and small caps, subscript, super script and normal.
 - vii. **Converting type to outlines.** This is a good idea if you are having trouble with a pdf file, have a lot of fonts already being used, are on a computer without a lot of memory, or plan to send the file to a service bureau for output. It eliminates the risk of improper display of fonts, but it makes the file much harder to edit. If you decide to do this, keep another backup copy of the file where you can edit the text.
10. **Making Charts.** To make charts in Illustrator, select the chart icon in the Tools palette. It should look like a bar graph. There is almost no documentation in the manuals regarding making charts, but there is online documentation. Open that up using the Help (menu) → Illustrator Help (F1)—the third item from the bottom of the list. Read it and select the type of graph you want to make. An Excel-like spreadsheet will pop up. Enter your data there, differently depending on the type of graph you plan to make. Follow the instructions for each graph type and set up the spreadsheet as shown in the Help menu. Use a separate document for each one since the undo command doesn't work for making graphs. There is only a revert option. Keep your first attempts as simple as possible. Make a sample with only a little bit of data first so that you understand how to chart it before trying it with a lot of data. Data can be cut and pasted in, brought in from a text-delimited file, or typed directly into the spreadsheet. Omit commas in numbers—ex. 125000 instead of 125,000. A few more pointers:
- a. **Do not select the drop shadow option with your first charts.** They just make it more complicated. Color works a bit differently in graphing.
 - b. **You can edit the text by changing the font, but editing is greatly reduced in graph mode.**

- c. **You can't add a background color to a graph file.** If you want to do that, then put a background on another layer or behind your graph in that layer. Then group the elements or layers.
- d. **When you size the graph with the pointer tool, it does not include the text area, so draw your box smaller or spec it mathematically.**
- e. Three other tools you'll want to use are the **Rulers**— View (menu) → Show Rulers (command R), **Guides** — View (menu)→ Guides, and the **Info** palette — Windows→ Info.
 - i. **Info** gives you exact X & Y coordinates and sizes for graphics you are drawing. When drawing a box, circle, star, or spiral, clicking first on the document will open up a window and allow you to spec an exact size for the element. You can also simply click and drag to draw one.
 - ii. **Guides** making lining things up easier. Guides become elements of the layer you put them on when you drew them. They may be locked or unlocked, if you need to move them.
 - iii. **Rulers** must be present if you want to pull a guide from them. The 0,0 coordinate can be moved by pulling the small corner square at the intersection of the rulers to a starting point in the document with a selection tool. Just select the small square and drag it to the desired location. By releasing the mouse and the 0,0 point changes location.

This should get you started using Illustrator CS. If you have any questions, contact Carol Grosvenor in Pubs, or check out one of the Illustrator CS Classroom in a Book manuals from the Pubs office.