School for the Future of Innovation in Society
Arizona State University

Designing effective posters

Adapted from FURI student poster workshop

A good poster is…

❑ Self-explanatory

- Tells a story
- Can be explained in 3 min

❑ Concise

- Uses bullet points when possible
- Avoids long paragraphs of text
- Visually understandable (charts, graphs, images, etc)

❑ Organized

- Logical flow of information
- Consistently formatted (font, color, etc)
- No distracting background images or colors – good use of ‘white space’
- Labelled figures

Key components of a poster

- ❑ **Basics**
  - Project title; your name(s) & major(s); your mentor's name
- ❑ **Motivation / Research Questions**
- ❑ **Research Methods**
- ❑ **Findings and Conclusions**
- ❑ **Clearly labelled figures**
- ❑ **Optional topics:**
  - Obstacles/problems encountered
  - Next steps
  - References cited
  - Acknowledgements

Drilling down - I

❑ Motivation / Research Question(s)

- What problem are you trying to solve?
- What is the bigger picture behind this problem?
- Why should we care about this problem?

❑ Research Methods

- How did you go about researching this problem?
- What important variables did you control, ignore or measure?
- How did you analyze the information you collected?

Drilling down - II

❑ Findings and Conclusions

- How does this research contribute to the bigger picture you identified?
- What value does your research have for society?
- What should be explored next?

Creating your poster (using PowerPoint)

- Adjust view (zoom in/out) to lay out your poster
  - Make sure you keep within margins
- Use **text boxes** for titles and text
  - Use bullet points where possible
  - Keep text **succinct**
  - Justify text (left and/or right) for ease of reading
- **Insert figures and graphics** (don't cut & paste them)
  - Or create your tables directly in PowerPoint

Formatting & layout tips

- **Font size 20+** for body text
  - Titles should be larger font size
- Keep poster text **under 800 words** (ideally under 600 words)
- Ideal character length for a line is **45-65 characters**
- Use a **non-serif** font (e.g. Helvetica) for title & headings and a **serif font** (e.g. Palatino) for body text
- Use **visuals and color** to guide your reader's attention and for emphasizing key points
- **Clearly explain your figures** (labels and figure legends)

Troubleshooting posters

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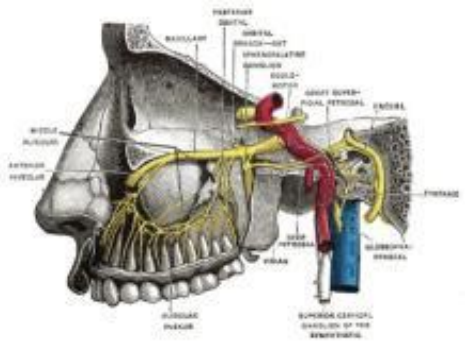
Ice Cream: Freezing the Brain, Providing Joy

Cortney Loui, Freezonics
Co-Mentors: Ben & Jerry , ice cream designers, Joe Schmoe , PhD mentor, Billy Bob Thorton, celebrity test subject
Arizona Sweets University

What is the relationship between consumption of ice cream and brain freeze?

Background: According to college students worldwide, when a student is ingesting ice cream, there is a finite probability of feeling satisfied with life. A scoop of ice cream, sprinkles and a cone can result in increased feelings of happiness, peace, and possibly brain freeze. While the repercussions of the "brain freeze" sensations are perceived to be negative, the joyful experience of consuming ice cream far outweighs that blinding pain of temporary brain freeze.



Methods: The researcher examined the causes of ice cream brain freeze to determine if it was harmful to the brain. The researcher also surveyed college students on their ice cream eating habits and their perceptions of brain freeze and ice cream. Finally, the researcher invited college students to have their brains tested as they ingested ice cream.

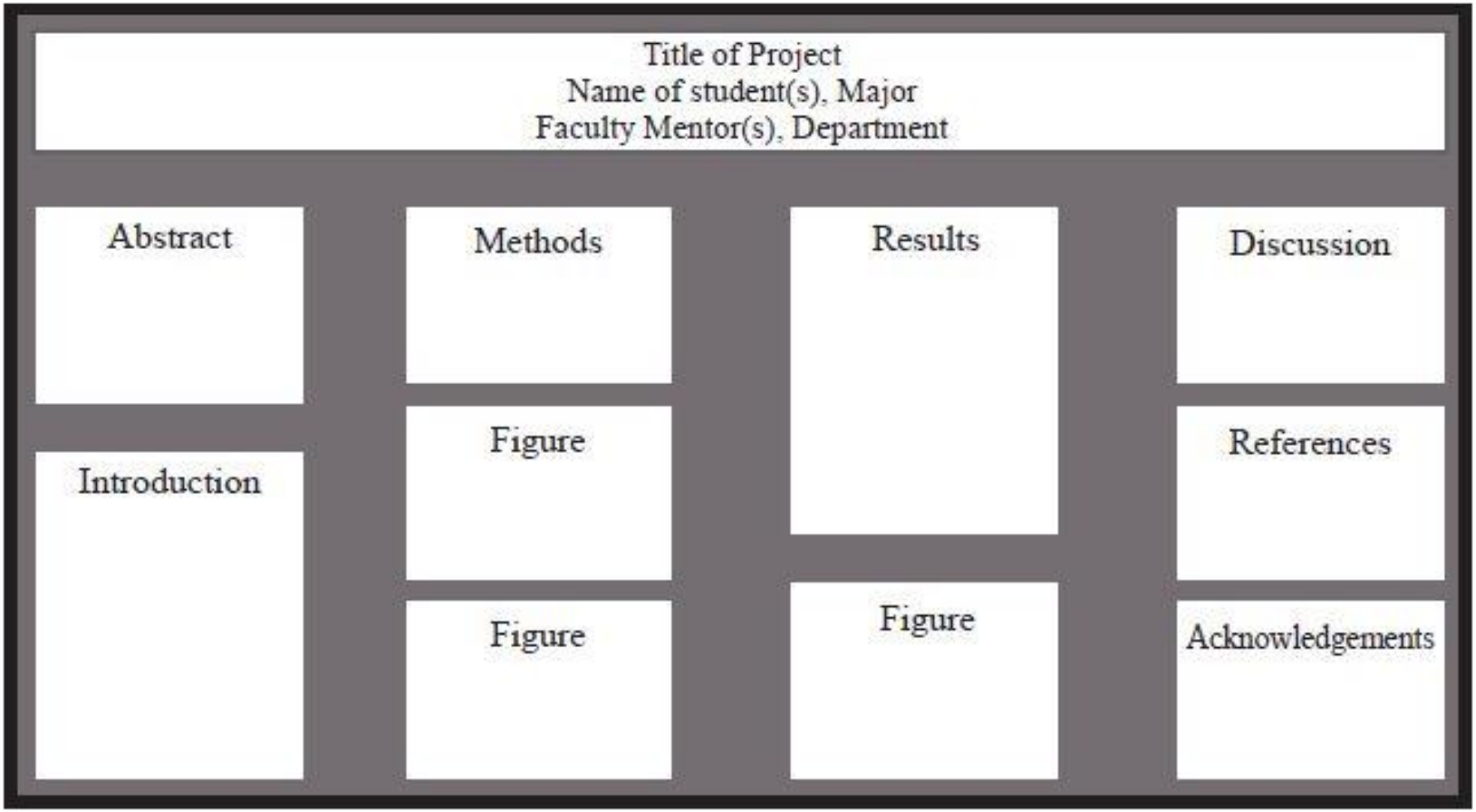
Latest Results: Brain freeze is caused by consuming ice cream too quickly without providing oxygen to the brain and time for breath (approximately 3 second shovel). College students have stated that they consume ice cream roughly four times a week. Brain examining is still underway to see if there will be permanent damage. The outlook is cool.

Note to self:
Something really

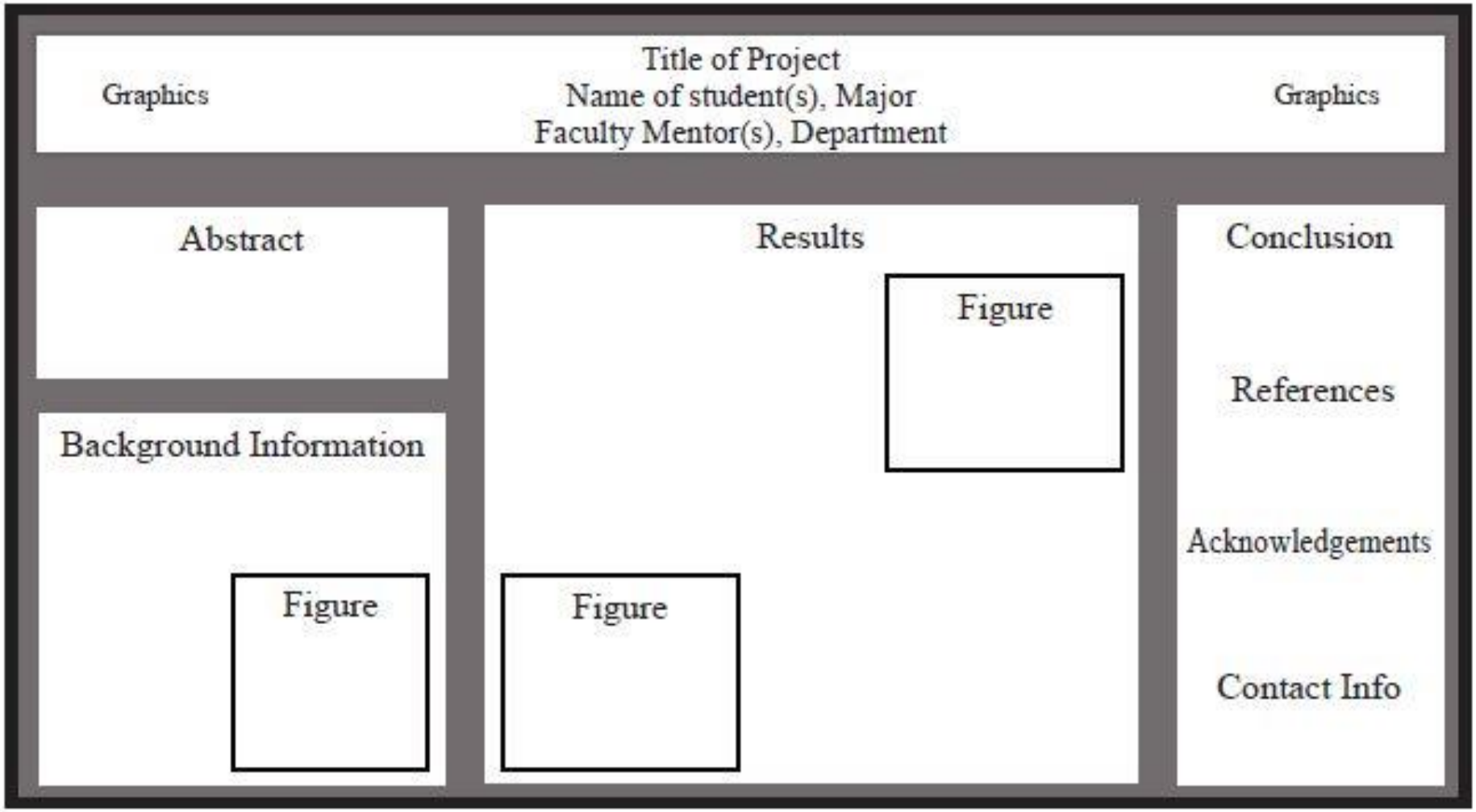
good goes here…

References:
Ben & Jerry Inc. The Art of Eating Our Ice Cream Quickly. Neapolitan, New York. (2013).
The Dairy Queen. How to Eat Ice Cream Like a Queen. Rocky Road, Colorado. (2010).
Happiness Doctors. A Study Examining the Increase the Happiness Effects of Ice Cream. Main Street, Disney World(2000).

Sample poster layout #1



Sample poster layout #2



Poster & presentation go hand-in-hand

- ❑ Think about how you would explain your poster to a visitor
  - What are the key points you want to emphasize?
  - What results would you want to point to when explaining your poster?
- ❑ Practice your ‘poster pitch’ ahead of time
  - Aim to give an overview in 2-3 minutes
- ❑ Tips for poster presentation day
  - Dress professionally
  - As people walk up, offer to take them through your poster
  - Make note of any questions or feedback you receive – this can be very helpful in planning your next steps for research!

Helpful resources

Colin Purrington on desgining good and bad scientific posters:

http://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design

Northern Arizona University tips on making an academic poster presentation: https://nau.edu/undergraduate-research/poster-presentation-tips/