

Guide to print

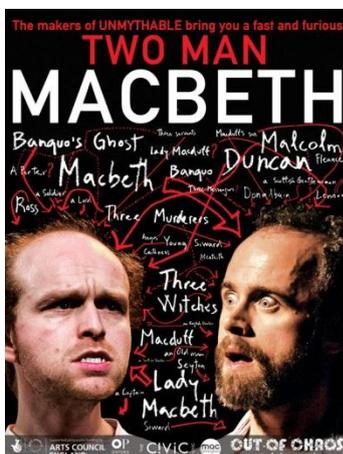
You have a show! It's in a venue! Congratulations! Now, you need to get people in to see it, and print is a huge part of that. As the Marketing Manager for a receiving house, I've seen a lot of good and bad print: so here's my basic guide. – Alexandra Coke

How it looks

Messages

Think about your show, and what you want the print to say about that show. What are your key messages about the piece? Which age group is it for? It's easy to come up with something beautiful which doesn't actually say anything about the piece of work it is advertising.

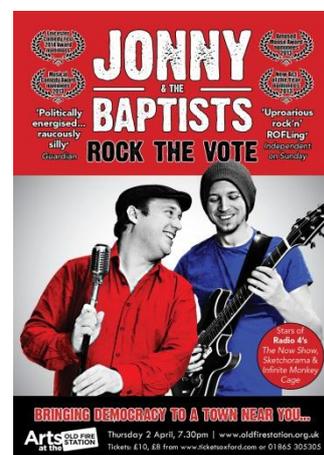
Here are three very different posters which do a great job of getting the messages of their show across:



The chaotic, comical nature of this show is conveyed through the poster, and the dark colours let us know that it's not for small children.



Hairy Hands is a comedy horror, and the poster riffs on old horror flicks from the 1950s. It shows the tone, and uses star ratings and press quotes to great effect.



The clear title and plain use of images and colour make this poster look really professional. The red & blue reminds us that this is political, by echoing election flyers.

Design

Your poster design can make or break a show. If it looks bad, people who don't know you will think twice about coming. To start us off, here are my three golden rules of print:

1. If you can't pay a professional designer, or do not possess an amazingly talented friend who will do it for free, don't attempt to do anything fancy. Use an image from the show, or stage a photo-shoot in costume - then put text over that image (see more on this below).
2. Don't use clip-art.
3. Photoshop filters should only be used by professionals.

Instead of using a real example of a bad poster, I have made a prototype for a play we've all heard of: *Harry Potter & The Cursed Child*. It features the most common poster mistakes. Take a look, then play Bad Poster Bingo below.

Harry Potter and the Cur[⚡]ed Child

Hermione

Severus

Draco

Albus

*For a ticket price
In a theatre
On a date
At a time*

The adventure continues...

Bad poster bingo

Too many images and/or words, making it hard to work out where to look first.	Yellow text on a white background, which is very hard to read. See also: Red text on a black background.	A bad Photoshop job, joining up two images which clearly do not belong together.
Something which seems utterly random and out of place: <i>Why is that even on the poster?</i>	Text which doesn't have enough contrast in colour between it and the background, which makes it hard to read. (Bonus points if it's important text, such as times etc)	A slightly awkward attempt to replace a letter with something else, such as a symbol or picture.
The use of more than one font. Sometimes you can get away with two – any more than that is unnecessary. (Bonus points for the use of Comic Sans or Chiller)	Grainy, bad-quality image(s). (Bonus points for use of clip art)	An ugly colour scheme. (Bonus points for using several colours which don't match)

If you avoid these pitfalls, your poster will be the better for it.

All you need is the title, essential information (see checklist below), a few short review quotes or stars and an image which you have permission to use. Anything more, and it risks being cluttered.

Never assume that designing a poster has to be hard! Here are some examples of what you can do with a good image:



Each of these designers has used their image in a different way, but the result in each is a clear, interesting, professional-looking poster. Text has simply been laid over or around the image. Software such as Adobe Photoshop or InDesign is a bonus, but these could be achieved using Microsoft Word.

Not sure? Show it to a friend and ask them to tell you what the show is about, and who it's aimed at.

Information

Make sure your poster and flyer contain the following:

- The title of the show, in a clear and easy-to-read font. It needs to be big enough that you can see it from a distance;
- Time, date and location of show;
- How much tickets cost, and where to buy them;
- Your theatre company's logo;
- Any short stars or review quotes, if you have them;
- Funder logos, if applicable. Some funders will ask you to send them the poster for approval before it goes to print;
- The logo of the venue, if they have asked for it to be included.

If in doubt, remember: Who, What, When, Where, Who. Ask a friend to read it over before you send it to print, so they can see if anything has been missed off.

Always send your poster to the venue's marketing manager to be checked before you send it, so they can ensure their details are correct.

Manufacture

Flyers

When you design your flyer, make sure that the title is at the top so that it will be visible in leaflet racks.

Flyers should always be printed double-sided. It involves a little more design time to put copy and information on the back, but it is only a little more expensive (£30-ish) than single-sided printing. A blank flyer-back is wasted space, space which you could be using to tell people more about your show.

Ideally, flyers should be printed on paper which is a **minimum** of 250gsm, which is edging it into the thickness of card. This is more expensive than lighter paper, but it makes a huge difference – anything lighter will flop over forward when put in flyer racks (see the *third rack down in the picture, right*), and passers-by will be unable to read it. 250gsm feels sturdy and professional, and if you can go up to 300gsm or 350gsm, please do.

A5 is a great size, as it fits into most flyer racks. A6 is alright, but is small and can get passed over when there are lots of flyers in the same rack.

Ask around to different printers in your area to get the most competitive quote.



Posters

Posters require less thought than flyers, as there are two main sizes and the paper weight doesn't matter. A mixture of A3 and A4 is preferable for a venue to receive, as we often have poster boards which can incorporate different sizes. If you can only print one size, go for A3.

Accessibility

Want to make your print more accessible to people with dyslexia and/or a disability? [Click here for a guide from CultureHive.](#)

Distribution

Most cities have a few free poster sites, and most will not allow posters or flyers to be stuck up anywhere other than these sites.

A lot of cafes, bars and shops will take posters or flyers (you may also think about putting some in hairdresser waiting areas, and other less obvious places). It can be time-consuming to go around putting them up, but is definitely worth it.

If you have some budget, it would be worth organising distribution. Oxford has two main companies with flyer racks and poster sites around the city ([Direct Publicity](#) and [Culture Calling](#)) – if you're not in Oxford, get on Google and see who offers the best deal, both in price and the number of sites they can offer.

Giving out flyers on the street usually requires a license from the local council (you can find out more about Oxford's regulations by [clicking here](#)). Attempt it without a license at your own risk!