



2026-2027 Guidelines for Student Poster Competition in Vector Borne Sciences

Virginia Mosquito Control Association is holding our 11th annual student poster competition. The competition will be held at our annual conference taking place at the Delta Hotel Virginia Beach Waterfront on January 26-28, 2027.

Prizes

- Winning posters will receive:
 - Monetary awards presented during the awards ceremony at the VMCA annual conference on January 27, 2027
 - First place: \$500
 - Second place: \$300
 - Third place: \$200
 - Opportunity to give an oral presentation on your research at the 2027 VMCA annual conference.

First, second, and third place poster submitters will be encouraged to attend the VMCA conference on January 27, 2027. During this day they will give a 15-20 minute presentation on their poster (time includes questions), accept their reward during the lunch banquet, and attend a Q&A poster session, if applicable. If attendance is not possible, a virtual option may be given for your presentation and possibly the Q&A session.

- Top five posters will receive:
 - Free registration to the 2027 VMCA annual meeting
- All posters will receive:
 - Opportunity to participate in a poster session where you can discuss your poster one on one with conference attendees.

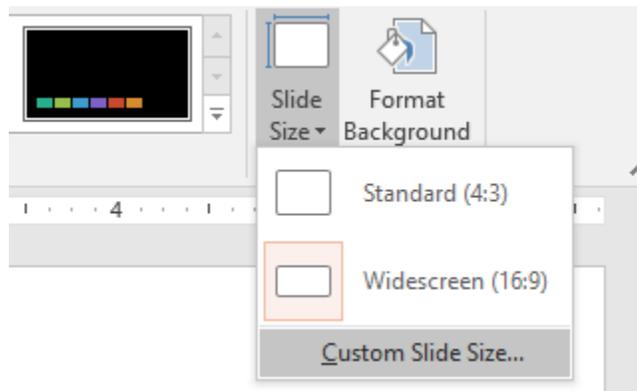
Deadline and Submission Procedures

- Deadline for poster submission will be Friday, November 13, 2026. Email containing PDF of poster and submission form should be received no later than 11:59 pm on the due date. Submitting your poster earlier than the deadline is encouraged. If a submission does not follow the instructions contained in this document, resubmissions will not be accepted after the deadline.

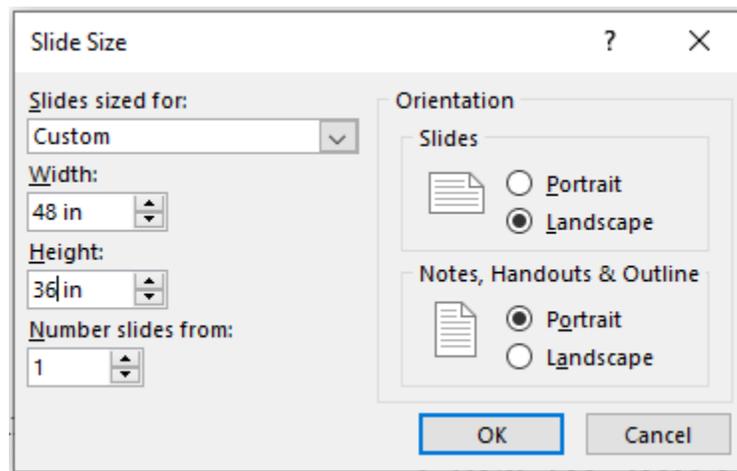
- Poster submissions should be emailed to: SCC Chair Karen Akaratovic at kakaratovic@suffolkva.us
 - If file size is too large to send through email, you can send a link to your poster using DropBox or Google Drive.
- Email must contain the following attachments:
 - [2026-2027 Submission form for the student poster competition](#) fully filled out
 - PDF version of the poster (**PDF file should be set to size/dimensions specified below**).
- Posters will be evaluated by three judges after the submission date and winners will be notified by mid-December.
- Each poster must be 48 inches wide x 36 inches high (121.9 cm x 91.4 cm). The PDF file of the poster must be set to these dimensions. **Any poster not set to these dimensions will be deducted 5 points after judges' evaluations.**
 - Quick how-to: If you are creating your poster in Microsoft PowerPoint:
 1. Click on the Design tab at the top



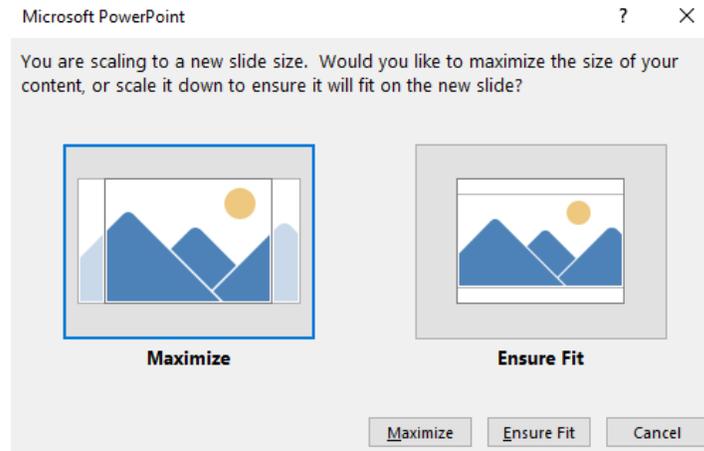
2. On the right side of the toolbar, click on Slide Size – Custom Slide Size



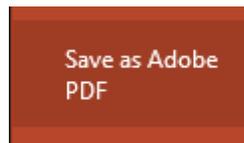
3. Set your dimensions to 48 in wide, 36 in high



4. If this message pops up, make sure you select “Ensure fit” to avoid parts of your poster being cut off



5. Double check your fit and then go to File - Save as Adobe PDF



Rules and Guidelines of Poster Competition

- Posters must reflect original research by the authors of the poster (poster should be submitted by a single primary author).
- Research projects must test a stated hypothesis and stress a purpose or need mentioned within the poster.
- Research projects must be complete or nearly complete with sufficient levels of data collected and analyzed to help support your findings.
- Acceptable topics of posters include:
 - All areas of vector-borne sciences (including, but not limited to):
 - Vector borne diseases
 - Arthropod vectors
 - Surveillance methods
 - Pesticides, repellants, or control methods
 - Diagnostic or laboratory methods
- There will be no separate sections for the competition (e.g., topic of poster, graduate students versus undergraduate students, etc.)
- To be eligible for the poster competition, the primary author must be currently enrolled in a degree program from an accredited college or university during the fall semester of 2026. The

college or university of enrollment must be within Virginia or a neighboring state/district: Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Washington DC, and West Virginia.

- Posters will be judged solely on the presentation of the poster itself. Any verbal or written communication with the judges will not be included in the grading of the posters.
- Each poster will be judged independently by three judges that have been pre-selected by the VMCA Student Competition Committee. Posters will be evaluated in the following areas:
 - Scientific Content (65%) –
 - Each section should be unique, informative, expressed clearly and concisely, free of grammatical errors, appropriately titled, and all information should be pertinent to the study.
 - Title (5 points) – Should be a short, comprehensible, and a complete representation of the work.
 - Abstract (10 points) – Maximum of 250 words: Should include a synopsis of the study with purpose, design, results, and conclusion.
 - Content (50 points): The following sections should be included:
 - Introduction and background with appropriate literature cited
 - Study objectives, hypothesis, and/or research question
 - Materials and methods
 - Results
 - Discussion/future directions
 - Poster Display (35%)
 - Organization (15 points)
 - Order of information, minimum redundancy, flow from one section to another
 - Use of space, color, and sizes of sections
 - Text, Figures, and Tables (20 points)
 - Legible text size and appropriate color contrast with background colors
 - Ability to be understood, effective use of figures and tables
 - In the event of a tie or discrepancy in scores, the judges will meet with the VMCA Student Competition Committee for a resolution.
- Any poster not meeting the requirements stated above will be ineligible for the 2026-2027 competition.

Submissions Involving Past VMCA Poster Competition Studies and Winners

- First place winners from past VMCA Poster Competitions will be permitted to submit a poster for the current competition only if the poster is focused on a different study from their awarded poster.

- Studies presented in past years' poster competitions may be the focus of a newly submitted poster, but only if they meet the following criteria:
 - All submitted posters must be original pieces of work.
 - Submitted posters may incorporate data from previous VMCA Student Competition submissions but all entries must contain additional data that has been analyzed, updated results, and newly worded conclusions.
 - Poster elements (e.g. write-ups, graphs, design, etc.) should be unique to the current submission. Entries containing identical elements from past submissions will be rejected.
 - Plagiarism of past submissions (even from the same author) will result in a rejection of the poster from the competition.

Document edited 3/30/2026