

Communicating Science

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In communicating science, consider two parts: “What the message is” and “how the message is delivered.” If both are done well, people will listen.

Delivering the message

1. Soft skills. In terms of message delivering, so called “soft” skills are critical to make sure we are communicating.

These include

- **Eye contact** - helps you make a connection
- **Listen** – after all, you are communicating, not downloading information
- **What you wear** – while what you wear may seem superficial, it can influence how people respond to you and see your approachability.

2. Strategies if things get heated

- **Keep calm!**
- **People care.** Realize that people get upset because they care.
- **Listen.** People want to know they have been heard. Try something like “I see this is important to you.”
- **The art of “Yes, and”** Try not to negate what others say even if you disagree; keep it moving forward. Try something like “Yes, this is going to be challenging, and that’s why...”
- **Bridging techniques** - to keep the conversation focused. E.g., “That’s interesting. And what the real problem seems to be is”

3. Crafting the message - do it purposefully

- **Bottom line** - be clear on what is really important and what you want them to know
- **Facts aren’t enough.** Present so that people care - i.e., tell them why the topic is important *to them*.
- **Avoid jargon!** Jargon presents unnecessary barriers. e.g., instead of “positive trend” say “upward trend”; instead of “forb” say “wildflower”
- **Analogies are powerful** - e.g., when discussing the problem of global plastic one researcher used language like “The bathtub is overflowing. Turn off the faucet.”
- Use simple graphics.
- Consider the main problems, and have a clear simple message.
Use the **Compass message box** (link below) to help you craft your message.

Resources

- **Scripting your message:** Developing and refining your message: Use the **COMPASS message box**: <https://www.compasssscicomm.org/message-box-online>
- **Alan Alda’s Center for Communicating Science** - Learning Center: <https://www.aldacenter.org/AKLC>
- **UC Davis Strategic Communications:** <http://strategiccommunications.ucdavis.edu/>
 - **Target brief:** http://marketingtoolbox.ucdavis.edu/docs/document-library/Strat_Comm_Creative_Brief_Template.doc
- **UC Davis Science & Climate website** <https://climatechange.ucdavis.edu/>

