

SHARE YOUR RESEARCH: HOW TO GIVE A GOOD TALK

HANDOUT: CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

One of the most important elements of delivering an effective talk is making sure you are connecting with your audience. Here are some general strategies to consider:

- **Be conversational.** Speak with your audience and not just at them. Think about ways in which you can interact with your audience.
- **Use clear and concise language.** Avoid using being too wordy. Avoid jargon (or use it wisely). Jargon are technical words or shortcuts many scientists use in their fields. Most people will likely not be familiar with the jargon in your specialty and using it too much might alienate them and keep them from understanding. Simple is always better.
- **Define key concepts.** Make sure you define concepts that are essential to help your audience understand your research and follow along with your talk (e.g., the name of gene, a jargon word).
- **Consider the context in which you are giving your talk and that of your audience.** Are you at a big conference? Is your audience international?
- **Ask questions to your audience.** Asking questions (rhetorical or not) keeps your audience actively engaged in the presentation and helps them critically consider the topics and concepts you are covering.
- **Use analogies.** Analogies can help the audience understand more abstract concepts by comparing them to something they are already familiar with.
- **Use repetition.** Repeat key messages, concepts, or ideas that are essential for your audience to understand your core message.

A few additional things to remember:

- **Don't put your back to the audience.** You can't be engaging unless you are facing your audience. An effective talk is a give-and-take dialogue between the speaker and the audience.
- **Make sure you can be heard clearly.** Remember to ask if the audience can hear you OK at the start of the talk and use a microphone.
- **Make sure that your pacing is appropriate.** It is natural to speak fast when you are nervous. But, if you speed up too much, you will lose your audience because they most likely won't be able to follow.