

## SHARE YOUR RESEARCH: GIVING A GOOD TALK

### WORKSHEET: MY TALK PLAN

As you worked through the “Share Your Research” course, you completed a series of assessments to help you apply what you’re learning. The responses to most of these assessments were captured in a downloadable document called “My Talk Plan”, which is essentially an outline for your research talk. We have created this worksheet version of “My Talk Plan” so that you can have the outline handy to serve as a reference in the creation and delivery of future talks.

*We remind you that a good talk is a presentation that is effective, that succeeds in meeting its goal(s) and in delivering its message clearly and concisely to its intended audience.*

### PART 1: FRAMING YOUR TALK

#### BEFORE YOU BUILD YOUR SLIDES

*Remember, giving a good talk requires SELF-REFLECTION and PREPARATION.*

#### The First Step in Building a Research Talk

1. What is the setting (a group meeting, conference talk, etc.) and the length of the talk you are preparing to give?

#### THE FRAMEWORK

*Knowing your audience, goal, and message will shape all aspects of your talk from your slides, to how you deliver your message, and how much jargon you use, among many others. Having these three elements defined will allow you to give a more effective talk.*

- Audience: Who are you speaking with? Be as specific as possible about your audience.
- Goal(s): What do you want to accomplish with your talk?
- Message: What is the core idea or big takeaway of your talk?

*Remember that self-reflection is an individual process. Figuring out what works best for you will require some trial and error. So practice reflecting and defining your audience, goal, and message. The more you do it, the easier and more intuitive it will become.*

#### Know Your Audience

2. List 3-4 questions you want to ask about your audience and how you will go about answering them (e.g., I will ask the meeting organizer the level of expertise and the demographics of the audience).

3. After you have answered the question above as best as you can on who the audience for your talk will be (*you might need to make some assumptions, but that is OK*), write a brief description of that audience here.
4. List 2-3 examples of how you will tailor your presentation to your audience (e.g., *identify a key concept from your research that you need to define*).

## Know Your Goal

5. Define the goal(s) for your talk (we recommend having no more than two).

## Know and Distill Your Message

6. Find a friend or colleague and practice the “[Half-Life Your Message](#)” exercise with them and then document any feedback they gave you or any reflections you had about the process here. Use [this worksheet](#) to help you.
7. Using the insights from the “Half-Life Your Message”, write down the core message of your example talk in 15 words or less.
8. List the individual experimental data from your research that you think will be necessary to support your core message.

## YOUR SPEAKING STYLE

Your speaking style is the unique way in which you deliver information to your audience. There is a broad spectrum of personalities in the scientific world, and speaking styles are usually a reflection of individual personalities. No matter what speaking style you have, it's important to strive for being comfortable with your own delivery.

## Know Your Speaking Style

9. List 3 things you would like to work on in your speaking style and how you will go about doing so (e.g., are you using too many filler words like “um” or “you know”? Are you moving around a lot?). We recommend filming yourself practicing or giving a scientific talk (or find a recording of a talk you have given before). You could also ask others for feedback or do a self-reflection to help you come up with this list.

## PART 2: START BUILDING YOUR TALK

### THE STORY OF YOUR RESEARCH

#### Your Talk as a Story

10. Identify the [key elements of your research story](#) for the talk you are preparing for. Write down a few bullet points or sentences of which information, data, figures, etc. you could use for each of the following.

- a. Exposition (Introduction/Background)
- b. Inciting Incident (Research Question)
- c. Rising action (Experiments and Results)
- d. Climax (Discovery)
- e. Resolution (Conclusion/Ending)

## Storytelling Techniques

Some [storytelling techniques discussed in the “Share Your Research” course](#):

- *Paint a scene to transport the audience.*
- *Make it personal.*
- *Build empathy.*
- *Create suspense.*
- *Show, don’t tell.*

11. Write down 1 or 2 different story vignettes (e.g., about triumph, excitement, impact, struggle, failure, etc.) that you could use in your research talk.

12. Choose a storytelling technique from the examples presented in the course, the list above or of your own preference, and use it to convey the story vignette you wrote down in the previous question. Write out bullet points or a few sentences of how applying your chosen technique to the story vignette will look like. *For example, if your story vignette is about an experiment that took many years to work, you could ‘make it personal’ by describing both the difficult process you went through and the emotions you felt. Remember you can also apply multiple techniques to the same story at the same time. For example, in this example, you could ‘show not tell’ the specific time in the lab when the experiment finally worked, setting the scene with descriptions of the environment, emotions, and people.*

## FROM IDEAS TO SLIDES

*The process of creating your outline and translating it into slides will be iterative and does not necessarily need to happen in order e.g., you might start with the data you plan to include in the body of the talk and then work backward to determine what goes in the introduction. As you progress through your outline, you will continue to iterate on different parts of the talk.*

## Build Effective Slides

*Building effective slides is a key ingredient in giving a good research talk. Making sure that the content of your talk is presented in clear, cohesive, and understandable ways is as important as the content you include in your slides itself. Having well-designed slides, both in terms of style (e.g., color, fonts) and content (e.g., data and information), will help you meet your goal(s) and deliver your core message effectively to your audience.*

*A reminder that in the context of this outline, we wanted you to consider principles and strategies to create good slides before you actually started making them. However, as we have said before, the process of building and delivering a good presentation is iterative and individual. So, after completing this course you might realize that your slides are your outline and you need to draft them first, and then refine them.*

Here's an overview of some fundamental [DO's and DON'Ts of slide design](#):

- DO keep your slides simple.
- DON'T have a lot of text on your slides.
- DO simplify how you are displaying your data.
- DO mind your colors.
- DO choose your fonts wisely.
- DON'T use low-resolution images.
- DON'T overuse transitions and animations.

13. Think of a piece of complex data that you plan including in your talk. If you have the data in a slide already, have it in front of you to take notes or make a copy to modify it. What is the main message from the slide? What is the minimum information needed to send that message?

## **START ASSEMBLING THE CONTENT OF YOUR TALK**

### **Body of the Talk**

*The body of the talk is where you provide your audience with the bulk of the information (especially data) to support your core message and help you meet the goal(s) of your presentation. The body of the talk is the core of your presentation; it contains most of your data and supporting information (e.g., an explanation of your experimental design, results). You can think about breaking down the body of your talk into smaller parts. Remember to think critically about what information is essential for your audience to understand what your research is about and to accomplish your goal.*

*Although, structurally and when you deliver your presentation, the introduction comes before the body of the talk, in our collective experience, getting started with the body of the talk can help you define which data will serve your goals, message, and audience best, and then make sure you provide the right background and content in the introduction.*

14. Look through the data set for the research you will present in your talk. With your audience, goals, and core message in mind, pick out the most relevant data, and summarize or distill each key result down to one main point that supports your core message, and list those key points here.
15. Take each main point you listed above and briefly write:
  - a. How will you set up/introduce the data/techniques you used?

- b. How will you show these data?
- c. What did you learn from that data?
- d. What are/were the next steps based on that data?

## PART 3: ROUNDING OUT YOUR TALK

### THE INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

*The introduction is the foundation to help your audience understand the rest of your talk. It provides them with the information and background they need to understand your research and why it is important.*

16. Based on the audience, core message and goal(s) you have defined, and information that you have included in the body of your talk, what information do you need to include in your introduction? What information can you leave out? Write down a few bullet points or sentences summarizing that information here. If you are building slides at the same time as answering these questions, use these notes to build the individual slides of the introduction section of your talk.

#### The Hook

A hook helps you “grab” your audience’s attention using some sort of surprising or arresting information. It is most commonly used at the beginning of a talk in the introduction, but can also be used at other key moments of a presentation, to make sure your audience is engaged and focused.

17. Come up with two different types of hooks you could use in the introduction of your talk and write them down here. If you are building slides for your talk and want to use a hook, add those slides to the talk now.

#### So What?

*Why should your audience care about your research? This “so what” is a critical question you must answer during your research talk. Having a clear “so what” will help you craft and deliver a more effective presentation.*

18. For the talk you are working on, what is your “so what?” Why should people care about your work? Write it down. If you are having trouble defining a “so what,” talk to a colleague. If you are building slides for a talk, go into the introduction section and add the “so what” to the talk now.

## **THE ENDING**

### **Ending**

*The ending is where you typically share with your audience the conclusions of your work, the main takeaways, and next steps. A good ending brings clarity to your research by summarizing and reinforcing your key findings and conclusions.*

19. For your talk, briefly write down the three key elements of your ending (e.g., core message, summary of research, and future directions)? If you are also working on building slides, make sure to spend enough time translating these ideas onto the slides so that they are as clear and concise as the talk's introduction and body.

## **TALK TITLES**

### **Talk Titles**

*As a general rule, the title of your talk should encapsulate your core message and give your audience a sense of what they are going to hear and why they would want to hear it. While your title should be descriptive, it needs to be short and simple. Avoid a title that is more than 10 words long. Think of the title as a preview of your research and not a summary.*

20. Use the core message you have identified and write down two (2) different possible titles for your example talk. If you are also making slides for a talk, choose the title you like best and make your title slide.

## **CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE**

### **Connecting with Your Audience**

*One of the most important elements of delivering an effective talk is making sure you are connecting with your audience. Some [general strategies](#) to consider:*

- *Be conversational.*
- *Use clear and concise language.*
- *Define key concepts.*
- *Consider the context in which you are giving your talk and that of your audience.*
- *Ask questions to your audience.*
- *Use analogies.*
- *Use repetition.*

*A few additional things to remember:*

- *Don't put your back to the audience.*
- *Make sure you can be heard clearly.*
- *Make sure that your pacing is appropriate.*

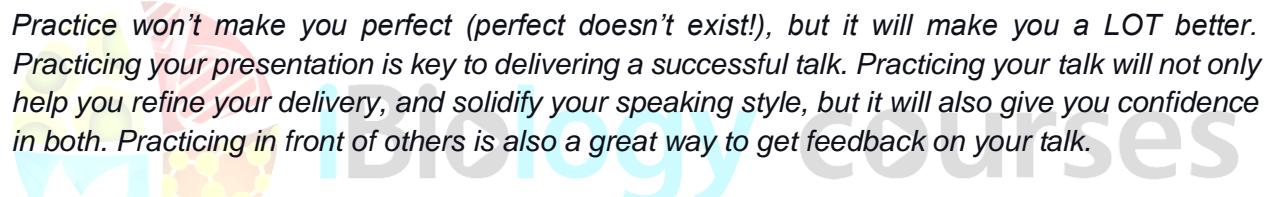
21. Identify two (2) examples of jargon you commonly use to talk about your research. Consider if the words might be inaccessible (i.e., difficult to understand) or misinterpreted (i.e., they might have other meanings to people outside of your field of expertise). Then determine which strategies (e.g., using analogies, defining a key concept) you can use to explain or describe the jargon terms to make it more accessible to your audience. We recommend checking out this [Watch Your Words Toolkit](#) by American Geophysical Union. It has some great examples of jargon words with dual meanings (even if you are not geophysical science, we think it will help you get the idea). The toolkit also has a worksheet with some simple questions and prompts to help you determine whether or not a word is jargon and how to simplify it.

## PART 4: GIVING YOUR TALK

### PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK

#### Practice, Practice, Practice

*Practice won't make you perfect (perfect doesn't exist!), but it will make you a LOT better. Practicing your presentation is key to delivering a successful talk. Practicing your talk will not only help you refine your delivery, and solidify your speaking style, but it will also give you confidence in both. Practicing in front of others is also a great way to get feedback on your talk.*

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22. Describe how you will practice your talk (e.g., will you script your talk? Will you practice in front of a mirror with or without visuals? Will you record yourself?).
23. List individuals or groups of people that you would like to receive feedback from on your presentation. Provide them with the "[Checklist for Getting Feedback](#)" before you practice in front of them in order to get the most targeted, useful feedback. Feel free to adapt the checklist to your own circumstances/needs.

### TAKING THE STAGE

#### Lessening the Nerves

*Even experienced speakers get nervous when giving a talk. So the nerves you feel before and while presenting are completely normal. Here are some tips to help combat the nerves:*

- 1) Before the talk:
  - Be well prepared.
  - Know or memorize the first 3-5 minutes, or just the first few phrases, of your presentation to get you started until you establish your rhythm.
  - Shake it up! Stretch or try some breathing exercises.

2) During the talk:

- Concentrate on something or someone during the presentation, like the back wall of the room or a comforting audience member.
- Try to smile. Smiling can give you a sense of well being.
- Use humor during your presentation (if it fits your style).
- Remember to breathe.
- Have cues on your slides to help you remember your main talking points.
- Remember that it is not a big deal if you stumble over your words or forget to say something. This happens to everyone and it's very likely no one except yourself will notice.

24. List your favorite 2-3 strategies you will try to help you lessen the nerves for your next talk.

### Dealing with the Q&A

The question and answer (Q&A) session at the end of a talk is often a source of anxiety. While the Q&A can be nerve-wracking, it helps to reframe it and think about it as an opportunity to have a conversation or exchange knowledge with your audience. Some strategies to lessen your anxiety about the Q&A:

- Try to predict the questions you might be asked.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand the question.
- Be ready for questions you don't have an answer for.

25. What are some questions you can anticipate you might be asked during your talk? And, what are your responses to those questions?