



## Tips for scientists participating in a science café

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### What is a science café?

A science café is an open forum where members of the public can meet scientists to discuss topical issues in a relaxed environment. It is not a formal lecture or panel debate but an opportunity for everyone – both the audience and participating scientists to ask questions and express their opinions about a topic.

### What 's in it for me?

A science café may give you new insights into issues relating to your work and how the general public perceives it. It will also hopefully give you new ideas on how to communicate science to a general audience as well as the opportunity to educate the public about your area of research and meet outreach goals.

### Your contribution

The science café format requires minimal preparation. You will most likely be asked to give a short introduction to the subject at the start of the science café. Try to keep this brief, use plain language and perhaps focus on one area of the topic that will provoke some questions and launch the discussion. You may like to bring along an object to show and pass around, but avoid showing PowerPoint slides!

As the audience's natural curiosity and interests play a role in deciding what is discussed at a science café, it is impossible to prepare for every aspect of a topic that may arise.

### Preparation:

- Talk about the topic of the café with people unfamiliar with your work and see which aspects provoke the most interest and questions.
- Come prepared with questions for the audience. This will also give you an opportunity to hear how the public views your research.
- If you have the opportunity, attend a science café beforehand.
- Show up early to the science café to meet the moderator and any other participating scientists and discuss a general plan of action.

### Getting the discussion flowing

The science café will most likely have a moderator or host for the event who will make sure that everyone has a chance to participate and will help maintain the discussion after your initial introduction.

Some ways to encourage discussion are:

- Present the topic in a way that relates to people's lives and/or is of current interest so that the audience feels able to contribute to a discussion.

- Ask the audience a question or their view on particular issue. You could also ask for a show of hands to a particular question and then ask a couple of people why they chose that particular response.
- Encourage audience members to talk among themselves or come up with a group answer.
- When a particularly good question comes up, try having the audience answer it instead.
- Use plain language and avoid technical expressions. Keep the answers to questions short and to the point.
- If anyone asks a complicated question, try rephrasing the question for the benefit of the rest of the audience.
- If the question is very specialised or will take a long time to explain, offer to speak to the person directly afterwards rather than risk losing the interest of the rest of the audience.
- Be comfortable admitting if you have an ethical concern about an issue, are uncertain about a question, or have not thought of a point before.