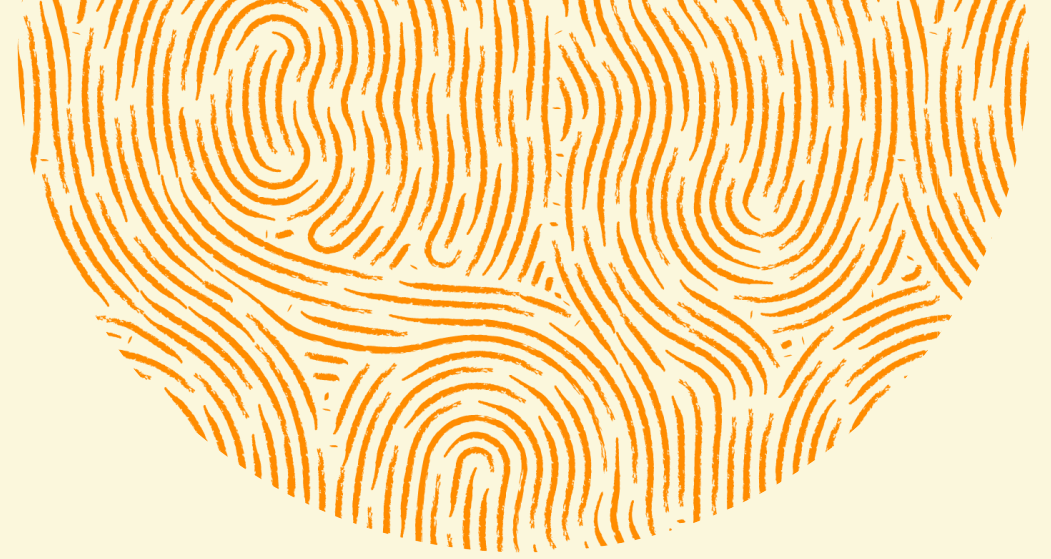


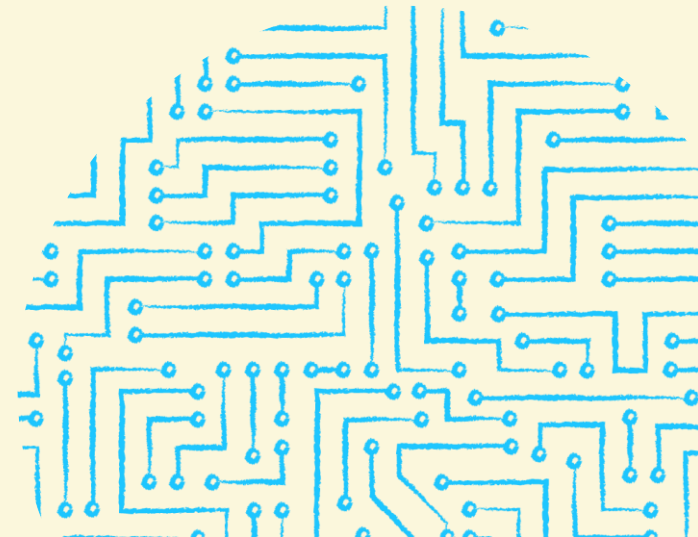
IMPERIAL

Societal Engagement



Great Exhibition Road Festival 2025

Staff and student training session
April and May 2025





Who likes olives?

Who has been to the Great Exhibition Road Festival before? (either as a visitor, volunteer or exhibitor)

Who has previous experience of engaging with public audiences in other ways?

e.g. schools outreach, family workshops, patient involvement, other festivals, online events...



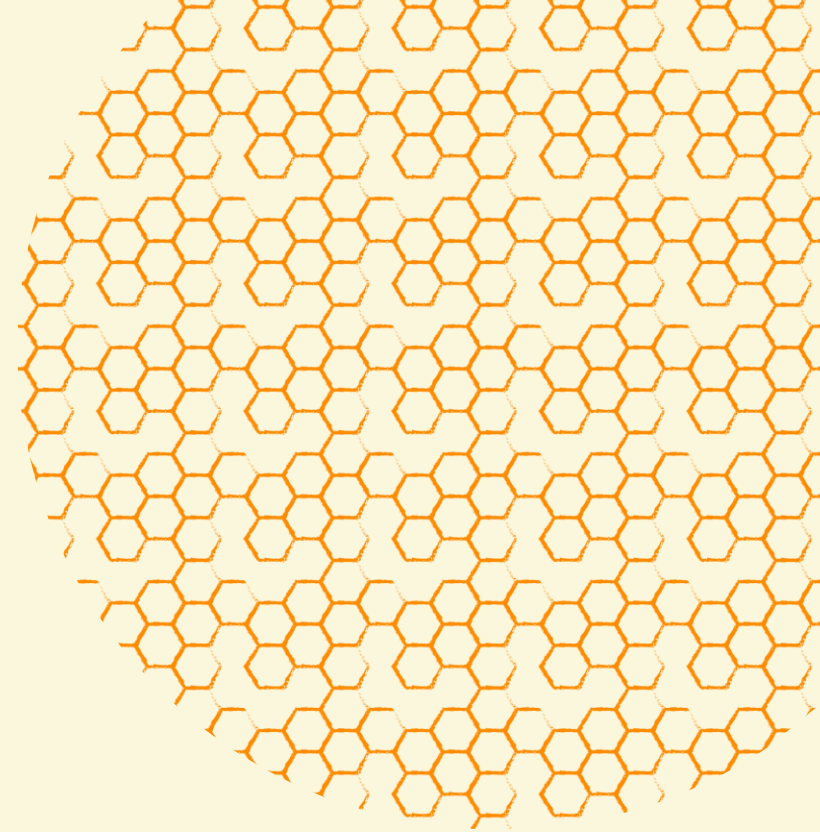
By the end of this session, you should be better able to:

- Apply a variety of techniques to engage different festival audiences (including hooks, storytelling, props and object facilitation)
- Develop confidence to communicate research with public audiences
- Consider the needs of different audiences to make their engagement as inclusive as possible.



Agenda

- 1 What to expect at the Festival
- 2 First impressions
- 3 Festival Audiences- inclusion and accessibility
- 4 Language
- 5 **Break**
- 6 Key messages
- 7 Hooks and props
- 8 Troubleshooting and resources



THE GREAT
EXHIBITION
ROAD FESTIVAL

What is Public Engagement

Public engagement describes the **myriad of ways** in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public.

Engagement is by definition **a two-way process**, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating **mutual benefit**.

[National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement](#)



Engagement, Knowledge Exchange and Impact

- Engagement is a route through which your research can have **wider societal impact**
- Public engagement counts as a **knowledge exchange** (KE) activity and forms a key part of the [KE Concordat](#) and [KE Framework](#)
- Key is: two-way interaction, sharing of ideas, and creation of new understanding, knowledge or solutions with those **outside academia**



WATCH Public engagement VS the deficit model
<https://youtu.be/QyD5cRRlbow>



The Great Exhibition Road Festival experience

- >50,000 people visited in 2024
- London-centric audience, interested in science and/or art
- High percentage of neurodivergent visitors
- Black visitors are under-represented (compared to demographics for London residents)
- Over half of survey respondents had no existing connection to the South Kensington institutions



The Great Exhibition Road Festival experience

- Visiting in a family group with children aged under 16 was the most common way to visit
- Having an **enjoyable day out** with friends/ family was the biggest motivator for attending the festival.
Inspiring or enhancing children's interest in science was also an important motivator.



The Great Exhibition Road Festival experience

- This year: 80 – 90 teams on stand based exhibits, various workshops, plus 20 – 25 talks and science performances, roaming performers, flash mobs, content in museum venues...
- A variety of food traders, several bars and chill out/seating out areas.



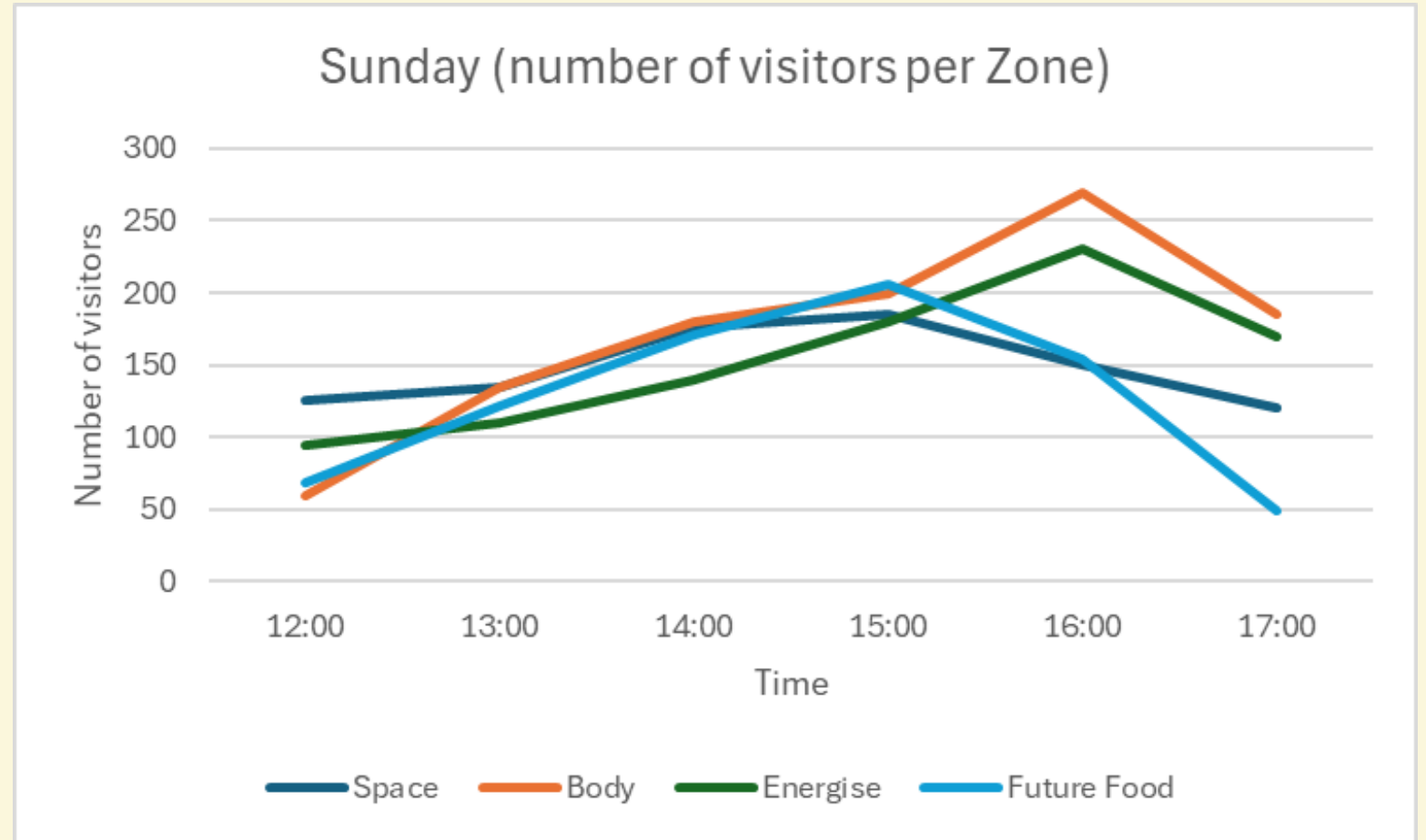
The Great Exhibition Road Festival experience

- Average **dwell time** at exhibits = 5 mins
- The festival will be **busy!**



The Great Exhibition Road Festival experience

- It may start slowly and seem quiet but numbers build up during the day and continue **until 6pm.**
- Be prepared with water, comfortable shoes, plenty of people to staff your stand and take regular breaks.



Making the right impression

What is working well (in terms of engagement)?

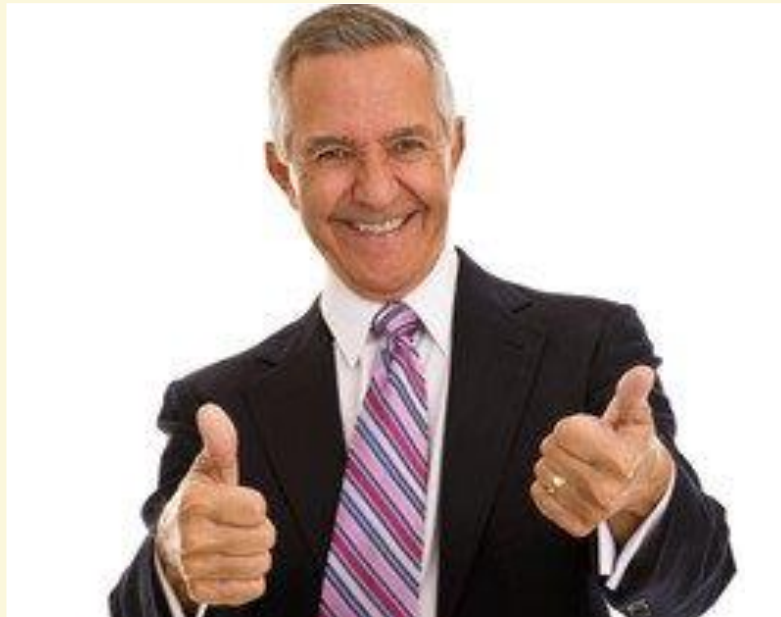
What isn't working/what would you do differently?



Body language

Posture, Gesture and expression = 55% of your message

Three elements of communication



Getting to know your visitors

We want to make as many visitors **feel as included as possible** and create a **welcome environment**

Diverse audience means diverse needs

Equity

Everyone is different and some may need different resources or different mitigations to reach the same end goal.



Equality vs Equity



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Quiz Time!

How many of our visitors to the festival are or think they are neurodivergent?

Individuals that have difference ways of **processing information and/ or cognitive differences.**



1 in 5



1 in 3

Types of neurodivergency

Dyslexia

Attention
Deficit
Disorder

Autism
Spectrum
Condition



Types of neurodivergency

Dyslexia

1/ 10 people have dyslexia. Can affect reading, writing, processing information, memory. 60% can have difficulties with maths.

Attention Deficit Disorder

Affects how individuals communicate and interact with the world. Some sensory overload, understanding social cues, literal meanings.

Autism Spectrum Condition

Short- and long-term memory, experience restlessness, can get easily distracted, difficulty controlling emotions

Top Tips

Large and small print

Arial and Calibri - easier to read

Keep it simple – use of language

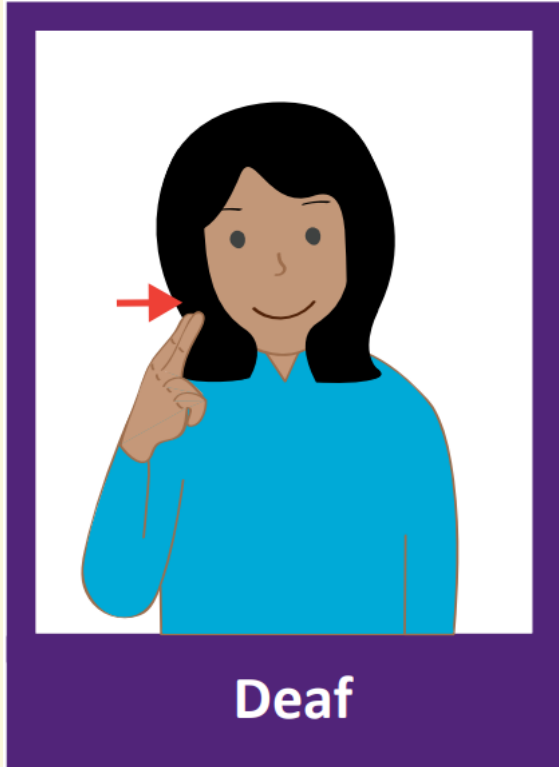
Keep it simple – process for participation

[Guide to using plain English](#)



D/deaf or hard of hearing

'D' signifies part of their identity.

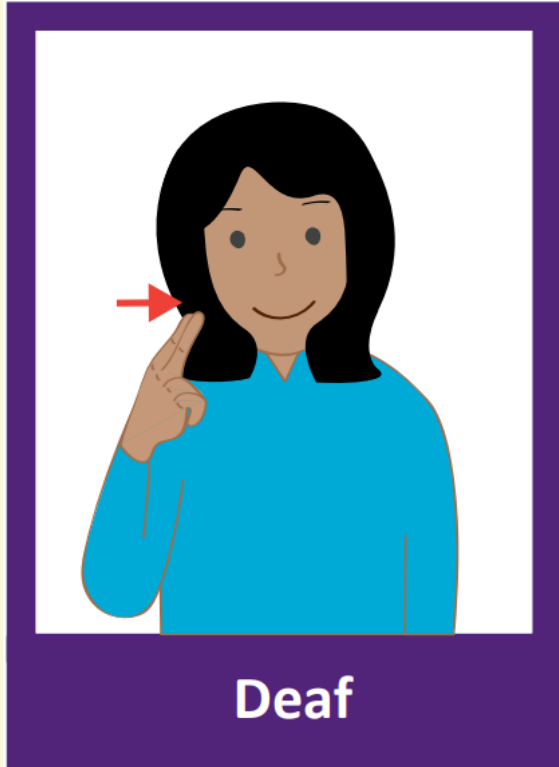


British Sign Language (BSL) is not a real language.

True?

False

D/deaf or hard of hearing



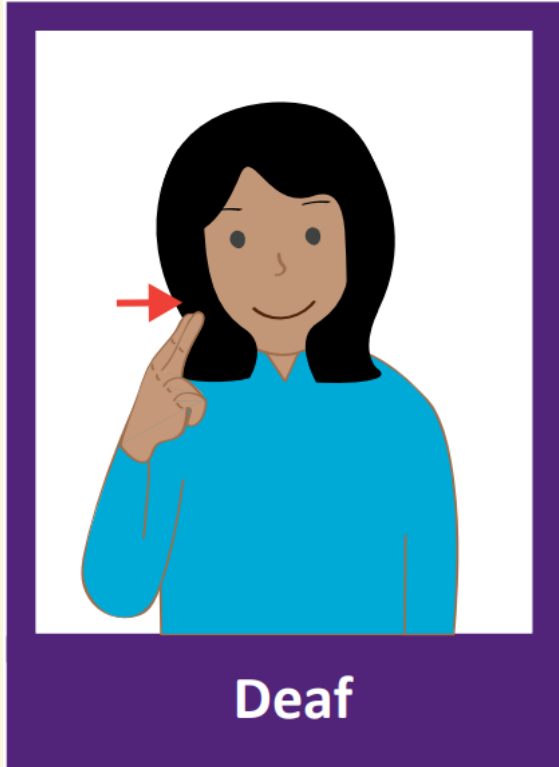
‘deaf’ might mean partially deaf or do not feel that this is a strong part of their identity.

Individuals that **use BSL** will normally need a **BSL interpreter** to attend public events. This is their first language.

Always speak clearly and facing towards them.

D/deaf led visits for adults on Saturday and for families (in the Family Zone) on Sunday

D/deaf or hard of hearing



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D/deaf led visits for adults on Saturday and for families (in the Family Zone) on Sunday

Visual Disability



Black and White colour contrast is best for individuals with a visual disability.

True

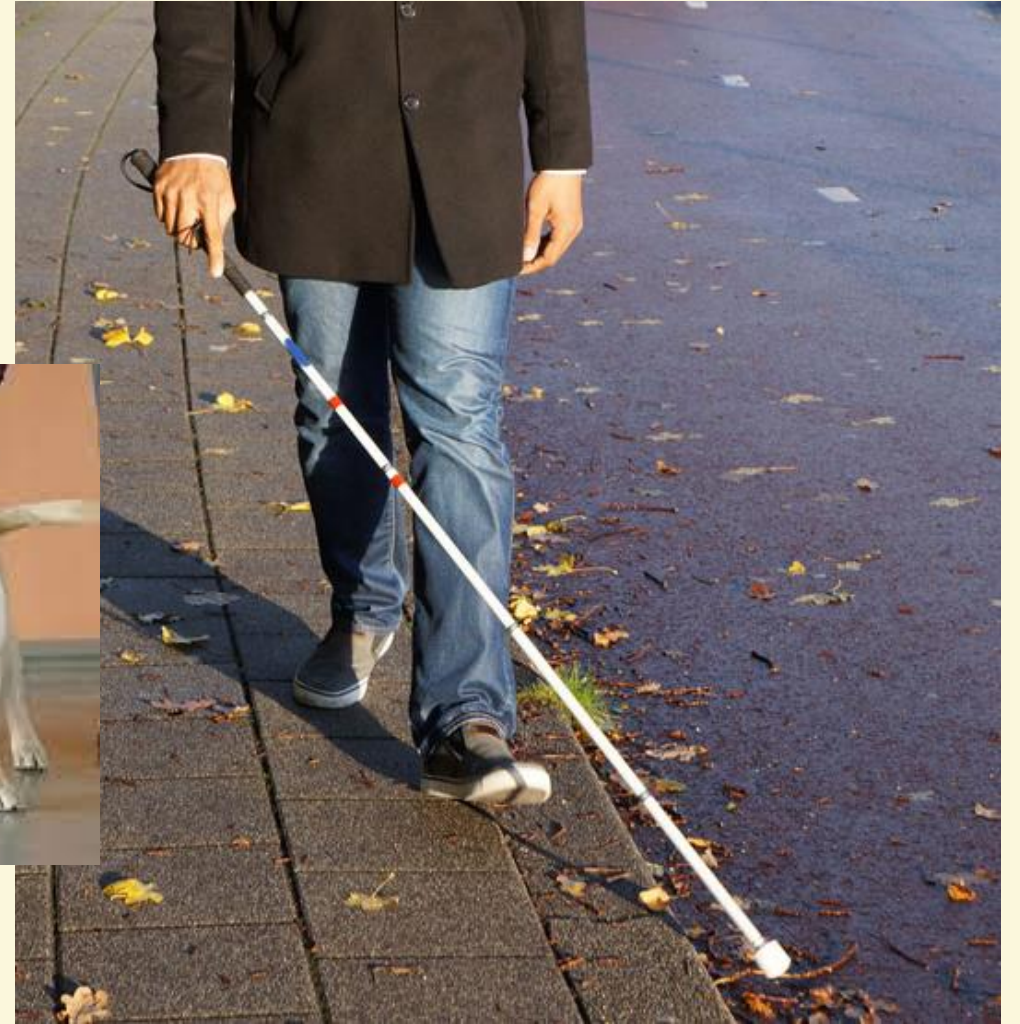
False?

Visual Disability

Visitors may carry a white walking aid, have a guide dog or companion

Sensory elements are encouraged

Audio description and descriptive language should be incorporated



Inclusion and Access terminology

Disability -

You're disabled under the **Equality Act 2010** if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

People are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference

Tend not to
use this word



Cohesion and working with local audiences

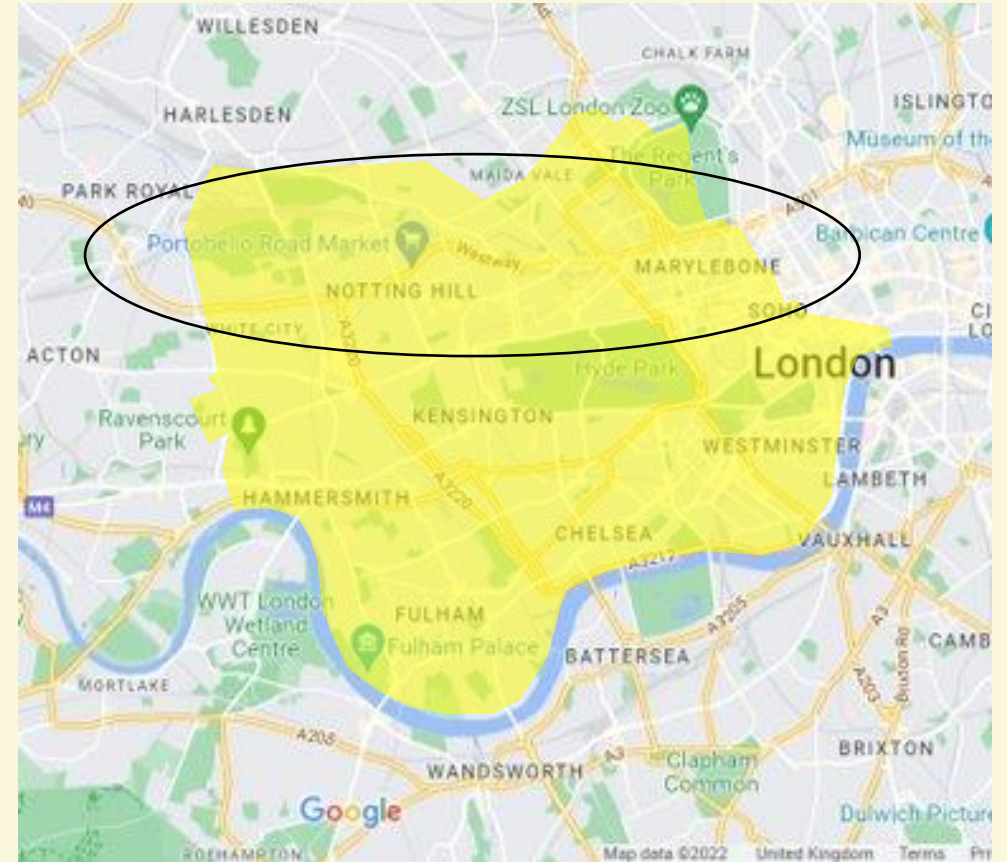
Our 3 neighbouring boroughs...

- Kensington and Chelsea
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Westminster

Most underserved parts of the boroughs

Projects prior to the festival

Specific marketing and communications



Barriers to engaging the community

- Lack of confidence attending a science and arts festival – imposter syndrome
- They might not identify as scientific individuals, despite being interested in science
- English Language might be an obstacle
- Financial constraints

Community Supported Visits

- ✓ Volunteer to meet and hang out
- ✓ Itinerary
- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Chill out space

Community Engagement



In summary

Some factors to bear in mind:

- Large print
- Colour contrast
- Sensory and tactile resources
- Simple English
- Toilets
- Invisible disabilities
- Multi faith space
- Sensory calm space
- N.B. There will be a separate quiet space available for exhibitors (staff and students).

WATCH a [short video about the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Campaign](#)



How can I help you?



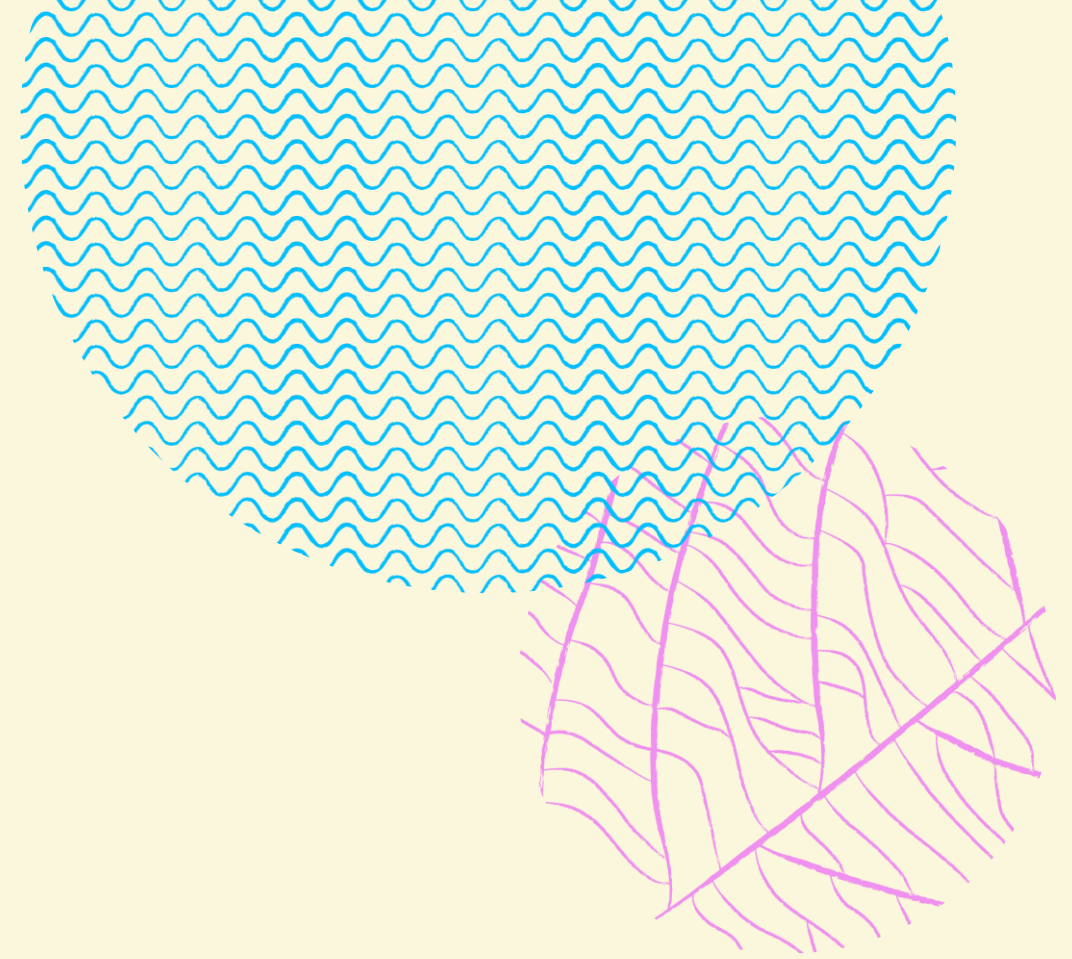
Making science communication accessible means...

Making as many people feel comfortable as possible by removing as many barriers as possible and making people feel they are valued members of society.

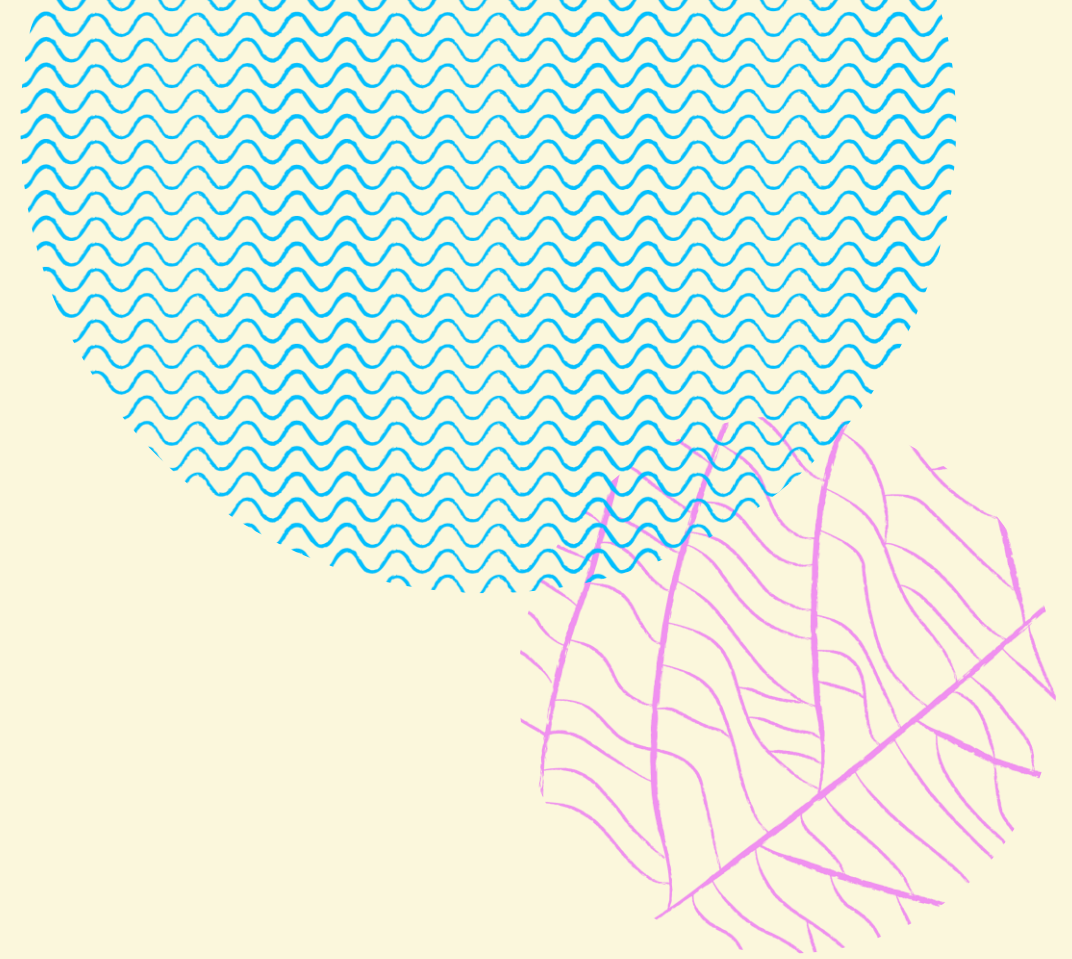
It will benefit many people - not just those that need a specific measure or need.

We want you to think about this from the **beginning of the planning stage** of whatever you are trying to engage the public with.





Questions?



Language - What will you say?

Science in Ten Hundred words

The 'Up-Goer Five' challenge

- Comic
- To describe Saturn-V rocket
- Using only the most commonly used 1000 English words
- Cutting down jargon
- Uses relatable analogies

Find out more: [UpGoer5 Challenge](https://www.upgoerfive.com/)



The Space Truck

The only flying space car that's
been used a bunch of times.



US SPACE TEAM'S UP GOER FIVE

THE ONLY FLYING SPACE CAR THAT'S
TAKEN ANYONE TO ANOTHER WORLD

(EXPLAINED USING ONLY THE TEN HUNDRED
WORDS PEOPLE USE THE MOST OFTEN)

THING TO HELP PEOPLE ESCAPE REALLY FAST
IF THERE'S A PROBLEM AND EVERYTHING IS ON
FIRE SO THEY DECIDE NOT TO GO TO SPACE

STUFF TO BURN TO MAKE THE BOX WITH
THE PEOPLE IN IT ESCAPE REALLY FAST

THING TO CONTROL WHICH DIRECTION
THE ESCAPING PEOPLE GO

PLACE WHERE FIRE COMES
OUT TO HELP THEM ESCAPE



Gas tanks with special
gas inside out of
non-breathing type air

Gas tank with
furry voice
type air

Space Truck Space Engines

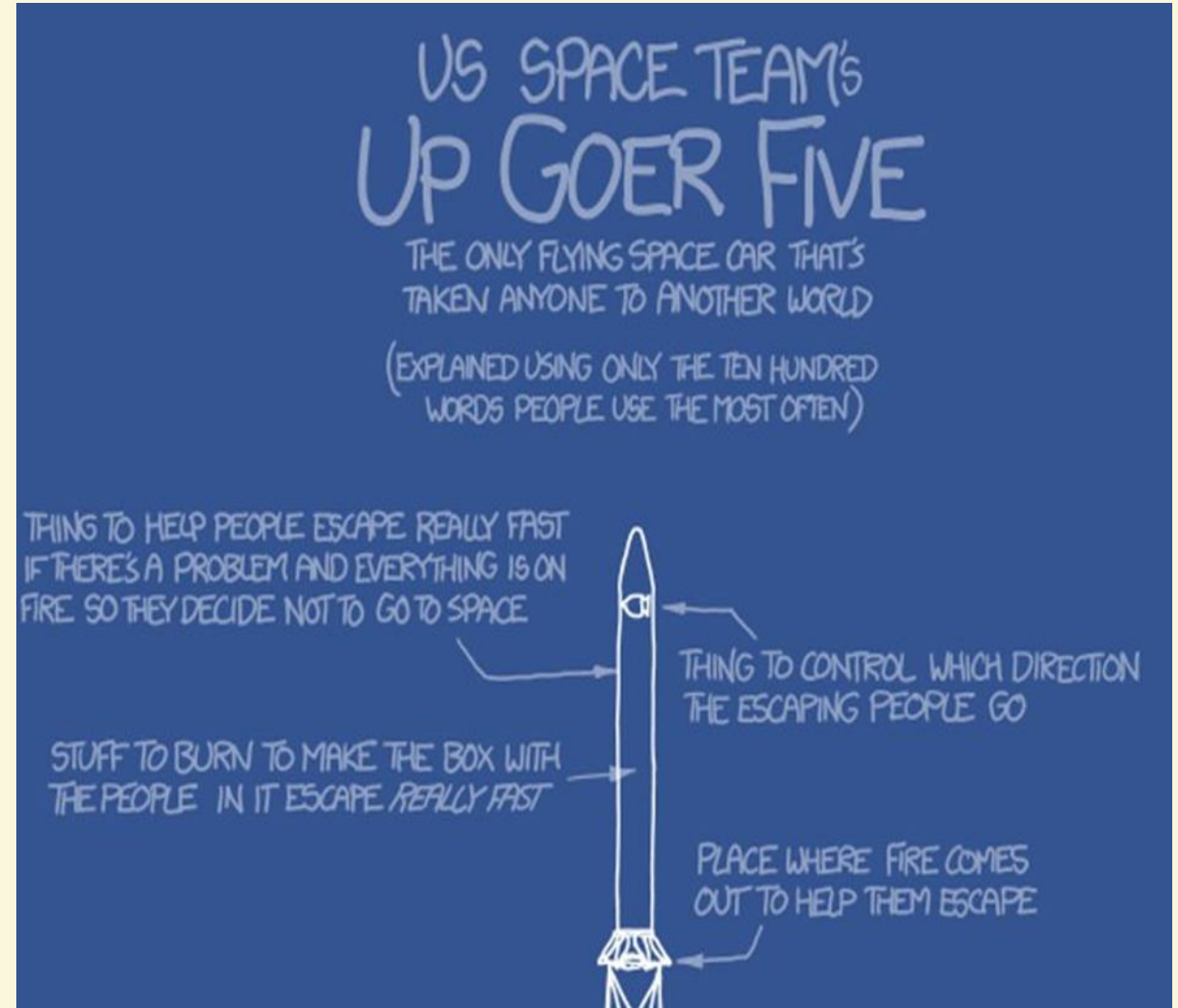
Fire comes
out here

Exploding-type air
(very, very cold)

Pipes for the breathing-type
air and the balloon-type air to
go to the Space Truck Big Engine

Activity: Have a go at using the text editor

'Up-Goer Five' text editor restricts writers to the 1000 most commonly used words.



Guess who

"I build things that look at tiny living things in the water, so that we can study where they live the most. This study is important because these tiny living things help larger living things, all the way to land, to us."

~ by JD, works with marine robotics to study plankton



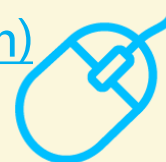
Guess who

“My job is to tell the computer to do things using words a computer understands. People want the computer to do some things for them so some part of their lives are easier, faster, or just better.

My job is turning people’s wishes into words a computer can understand and do very well.”

~ by Yang, a software engineer

READ more examples [Ten Hundred Words of Science \(tumblr.com\)](https://www.tumblr.com/tenhundredwordsofscience)



Language

- Accessible – not ‘dumbing down’
- Use terminology but explain it
- Ideas/ concepts your audience are familiar with e.g. comparing heart to a pump
- Beware of words with double meaning- e.g. culture



Words Matter: Breaking Down Jargon

Natural History Museum guide: [Nature of Science Terms](#) glossary for explainers

Scientists Say	People may hear	Instead say
Theory	Guess	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An explanation• Our best understanding• A tried and tested way of making sense of the facts.
Significant (statistically)	Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's very unlikely this result could just be chance.• We're confident of these findings.
Risk	Danger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chance• Possibility
Determines	Completely controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Influences• Affects
Predicts	Forecasts the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggests• Implies ...

Inclusive approaches in the language you use

Assumptions – assuming someone is heterosexual, has been on an aeroplane, knows what a PhD is

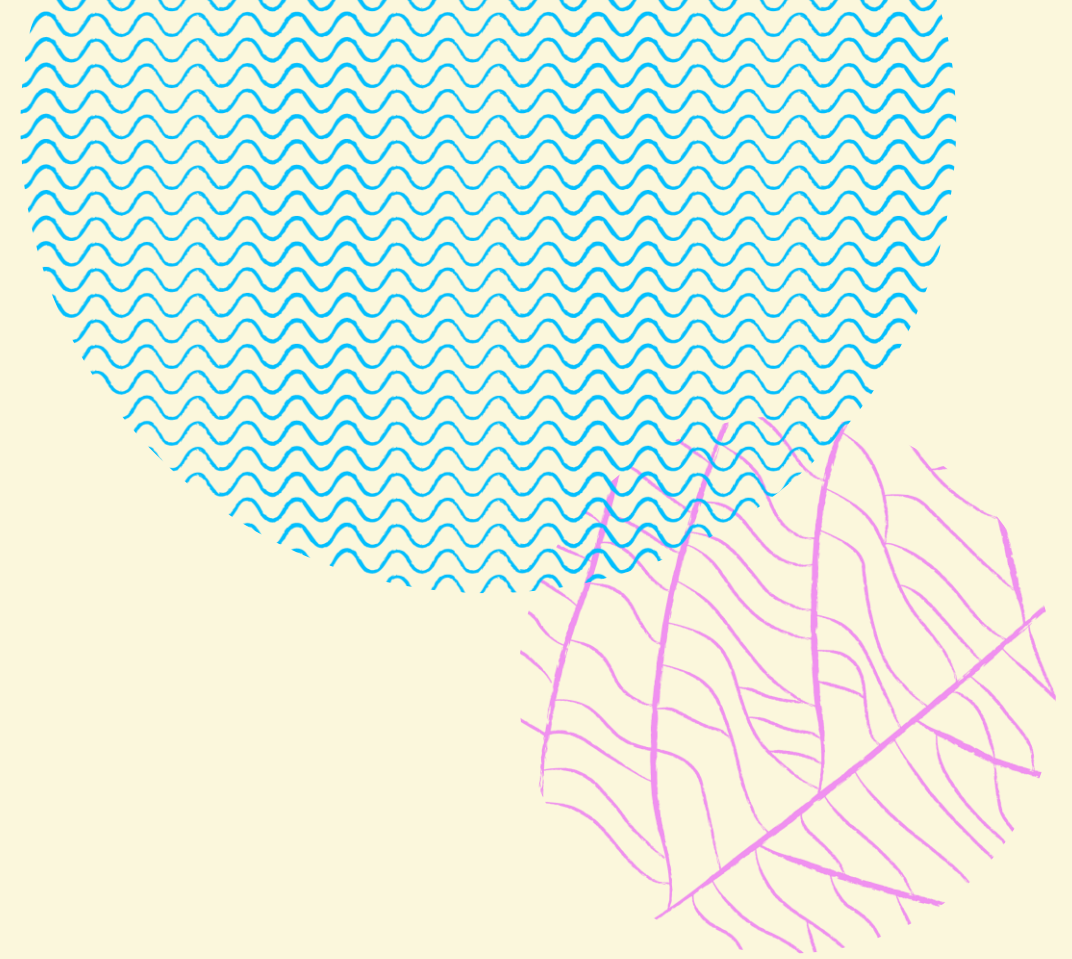
Pronouns – referencing boy or girl, Ladies and Gentlemen, Guys (Unsure use they/ them)

English language – be flexible with your approach to communication

Casual insensitive humour – be mindful of what is acceptable

Aware of visitors' language – 'queer' reclaimed word





Questions?

Tea break

Back at...



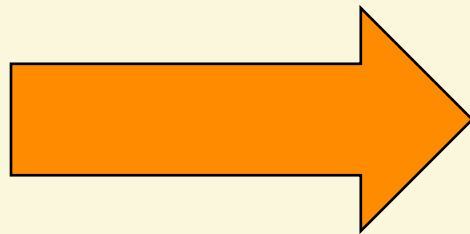
Defining your Key Messages

Aims

- **Why** are you doing this engagement?
- **What** do you want to **achieve**?
- What **issue** are you addressing?

Tool to define your aims:

[NCCPE Purposes of Engagement](#)



Key Messages

- What **information** does your audience need to meet your aims?
- What core content ideas tell the '**story**' of your engagement
- Up to **3 messages** in one activity.
- Repeat them at least 3 times during.

[Guide to define your key messages.](#)

Zoologists at a Science Festival

Aim: To increase public awareness of the use of new technology to monitor the most remote habitats on earth

Key messages:

- The natural world is changing, often in ways we don't understand because there are places and species for which we have little information.
- Developments in technology are enabling us (scientists) to monitor some of these hard-to-reach environments and species.
- The results are often surprising and reveal new information and knowledge about the natural world.



Zoologists at a science festival

Key messages example



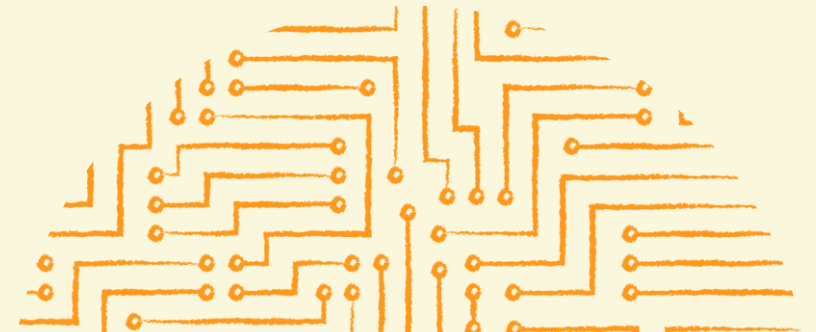
They integrated their key messages into their exhibit by...

- Having monitoring **equipment** that visitors could handle and look at
- Displaying **images** of researchers and equipment in remote locations
- Having **soft toys** of some of the species they study/monitor
- Including a digital **interactive map** showing the locations they study and the tracking data they have gathered so far
- Displaying camera trap **images** of species they are monitoring
- Creating **interactive games** highlighting species diversity and vulnerability
- Including their **key messages in every conversation** they had!



Structuring your interactions

Hooks and conversation starters



Good openers...

- Make eye contact, wave/welcome them over
- Introduce yourself and what you do
- Invite people to take part in a particular activity:
 - Would you like to try/hold/see ...?
- Try to gauge interest areas and the level of knowledge at the outset and tailor your response accordingly. Questions such as:
 - Have you heard about ... ? (Beware this is a closed question, so have a follow-up ready!)
 - How do you feel about.... the amount of rain we get in the UK?



Avoid using openers like:

- ‘Can I help you?’
- ‘Are you OK?’
- Do you understand?
- Do you have a science background?



Hooks

Confusion – Say something off the wall or contradictory that confuses the audience. As long as this can be understood later. Could be an opportunity to address common misconceptions.

e.g. “I’m a climatologist and I don’t believe the climate change data is convincing!” May be a good statement that is later explained: you believe it can convince scientists but not necessarily public groups!

Linking – Start with something all of us might be interested in (e.g. prolonging our phone’s battery life and link to your research).



Hooks

Demonstration – Set up and demonstrate a scientific concept or new technology if relevant.

Teaser – Allude to information you'll reveal later (similar to clickbait but not anti-climactic!)

Humour – Tell a joke, as long as you've tested it and know it's not offensive!



Hooks

Question – Ask the audience a question and get them to invest in guessing an answer.

Interaction – Interacting with the audience in other ways. E.g. digital votes / games / tricks

Anecdote – Telling a story about yourself. Something you learned growing up? Something that drove you to science? Something interesting that happened during your research?



Anecdotes and storytelling

Using storytelling as a hook

- Structure
- Makes information memorable
- Engaging and fun!
- Puts your audience into your shoes
- Emotional engagement – conflict and resolutions, surprise, happiness
- Potential for cross-cultural connections



Which hooks were used?

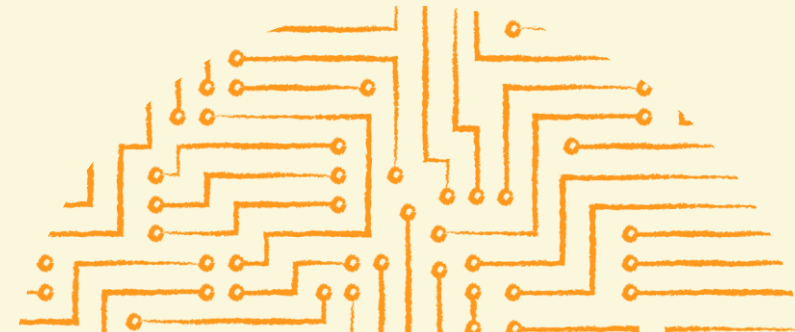
Anecdote, Question, Interaction, Demonstration, Teaser, Confusion, Humour, Linking

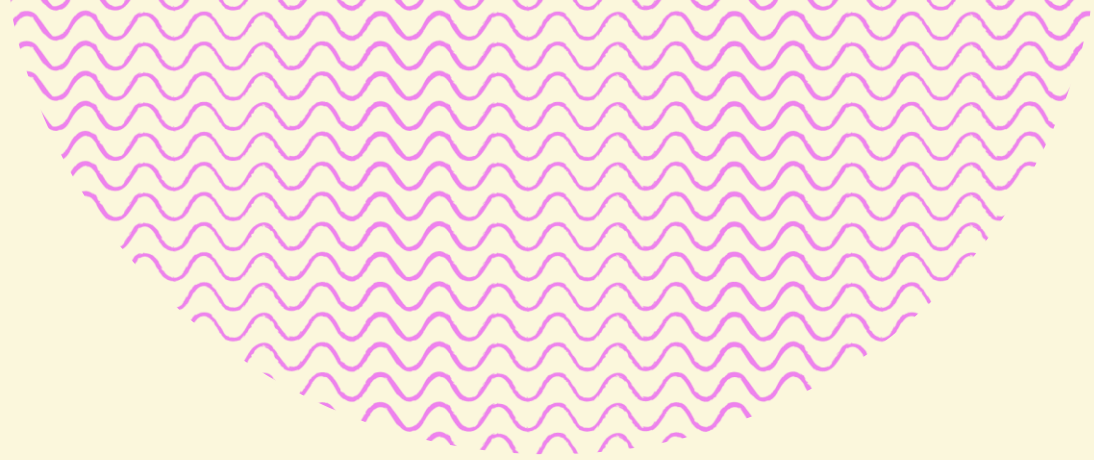


Mark Shaw: One very dry demo



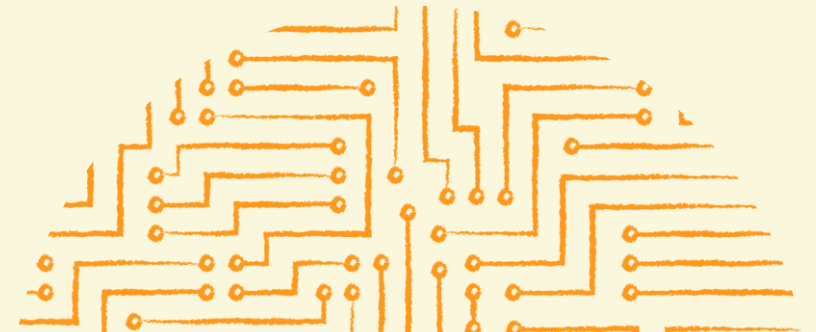
Questions?





Using objects

How can objects help you to
engage your audience?



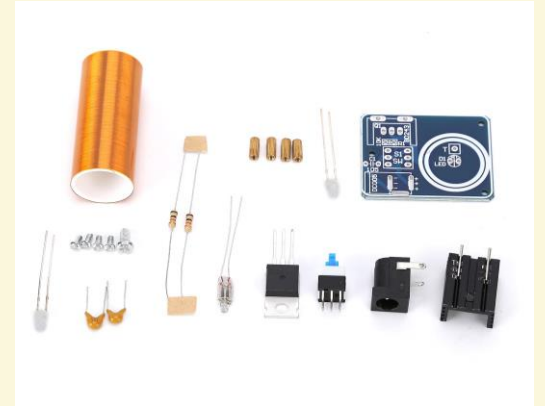
Object facilitation

- Use questions that get people talking:
 - who, what, why, how, when
 - describe using your senses
- Build on people's experiences and use their prior knowledge
- Summarise recent parts of the discussion
- Confirm/give key pieces of information
- It's not about guessing a mystery – it's about helping people focus and think more deeply



Props

- Health and safety
- Is it valuable
- Suitable for different ages
- Choose carefully – what does it demonstrate?
- The power of images
- Geography and maps
- It doesn't all have to be on the table at the same time
- Reveals!



In summary...

- Don't make assumptions about their knowledge/awareness (Never under-estimate their intelligence nor over-estimate their knowledge)
- Keep thinking about what is going to interest them/appeal to them? What is **relevant** to your audience?
- Remember it's **a conversation**
 - What do you think about ..?
 - How do you feel about ..?
 - How could you use ...?
 - Does it remind you of anything ...?



WATCH How to explain a science idea clearly <https://youtu.be/u9cqWQQqHoU>



Questions?

Activity: Practice starting a conversation

Use your prop to start a conversation with your audience

- Imagine your partner is a visitor at the festival – they've just walked over to your exhibit
- Use a hook to start your conversation (this could involve your prop or another hook of your choice)
- Introduce yourself and your research
- Think about language and break down any jargon
- Make your conversation relevant to your visitor – remember, you can ask them questions!



2 mins

A's you are the scientist or Imperial representative

B's you are the public (on your card)

Closing the conversation

- Thank people for their interest and time:
 - Thank you, it was lovely to talk to you.
- Introduce visitors to another activity or encourage them to find out more by making a link:
 - You might be interested in having a closer look at ...
 - You can find out more about this on our website/in this brochure.

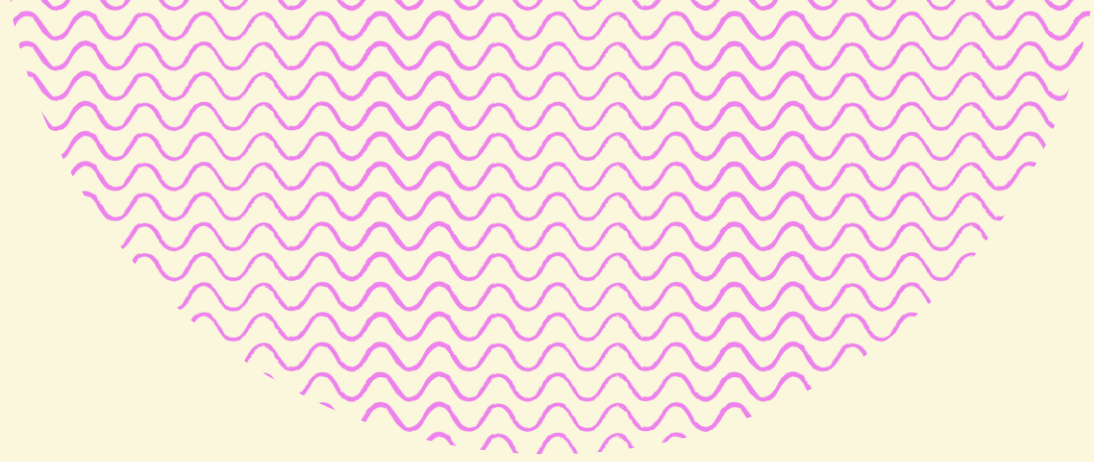


Closing the conversation

- Give ideas for extending the experience by connecting to their lives or remind them of the skills or science knowledge they have used.
 - Thank you for taking part. Next time that you are walking to school look out for...
 - You have been working like a scientist using problem solving skills, observation etc.
- Or you can apologise for interrupting and politely explain that you need to talk to other waiting visitors.

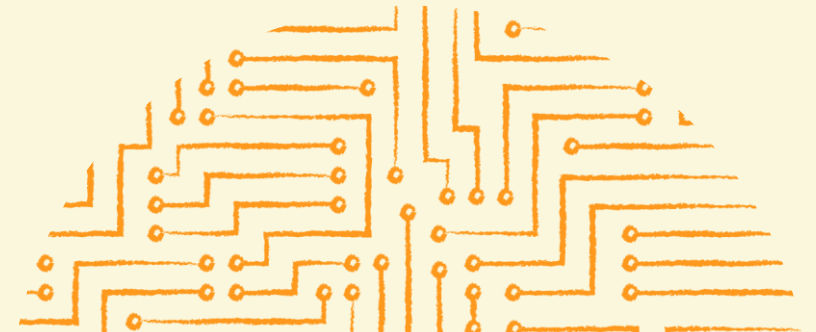


Questions?



Challenging situations

What concerns do you have about
engaging with the public?



Challenging Situations

- A child will not give you back your prop...
- Someone asks you a question that you don't know the answer to...
- Someone won't leave you alone/keeps talking to you and asking questions...
- Someone you are talking to becomes angry or upset...



Challenging Situations

- There is a massive crowd waiting to speak to you at a festival exhibit...
- Someone asks you why your work is important...
- A member of the public is dominating the conversation...
- A member of the public is not contributing to the conversation...

Practice bringing the conversation back to your key messages:

[Watch the Bridging technique](#) (11.50 minutes into the film)



I can't answer that question.
But you could try this
website/book/organisation
to find out more....

I don't know the
answer to your
question, but maybe
my colleague does...

That's an interesting
question, but I'm
afraid I don't know
the answer.

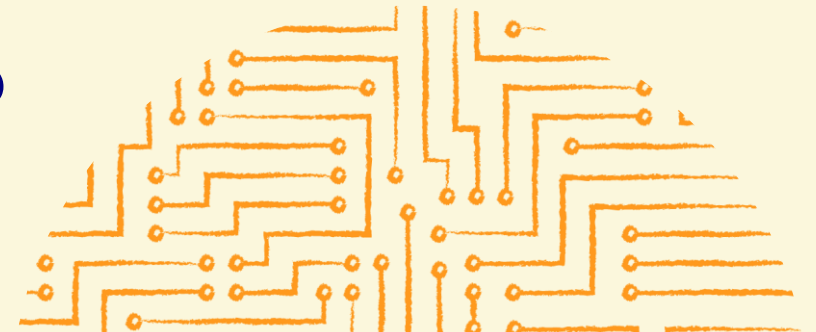
It's okay to say 'I do not know'

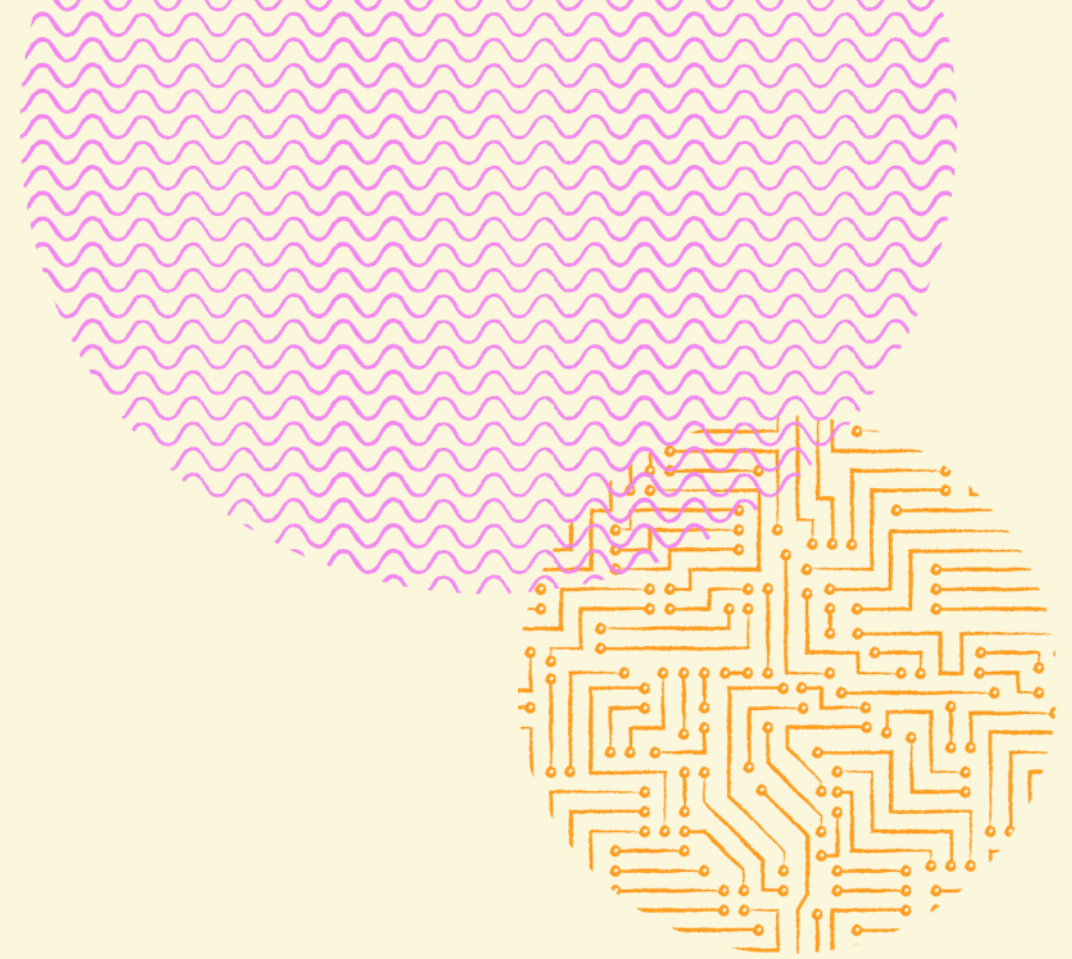
That's an interesting question, but
there's still so much we don't
know (that's the great thing about
working in science, there are so
many things for us still to
discover!)

That's outside of my area of study, so
I can't answer that question. What I
focus on/research/am interested in
is....



Any remaining questions?





Further support and resources

Further support

- In the first instance, **contact your Zone Manager** for support and feedback about your engagement plans.
- For additional advice and support, book a [1-to-1 advice session](#)
- Please share what you have learned today with your team
- Look out for further briefing documents and information
- Use our online [engagement toolkit](#)



Engagement toolkit

Related Guides - Audiences and designing your activity

- [Engaging with adults](#)
- [Engaging with families](#)
- [How do I plan an engagement activity?](#)
- [How do I design hands-on activities?](#)
- [How do I engage through games and play?](#)
- [How do I give an engaging talk?](#)
- [How do I create a science exhibition?](#)



Engagement toolkit

Related Guides - Refining ideas

- [How do I embed evaluation in my public engagement activity?](#)
- [How do I champion diversity and inclusion?](#)
- [How do I engage the public with a controversial issue?](#)
- [How do I have effective dialogue with the public?](#)



Tell us what you thought

Please give us your honest feedback on this session.

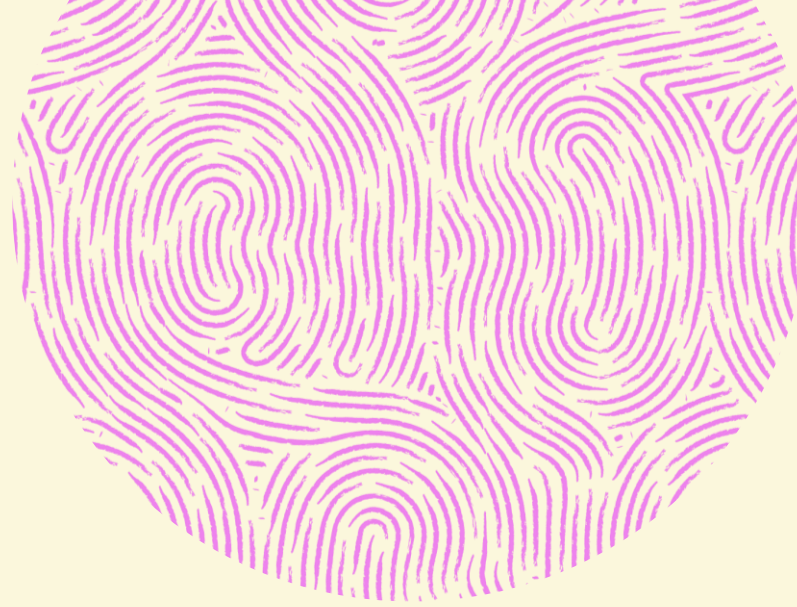
Scan the QR code or [complete the survey via the link.](#)

Thank you!

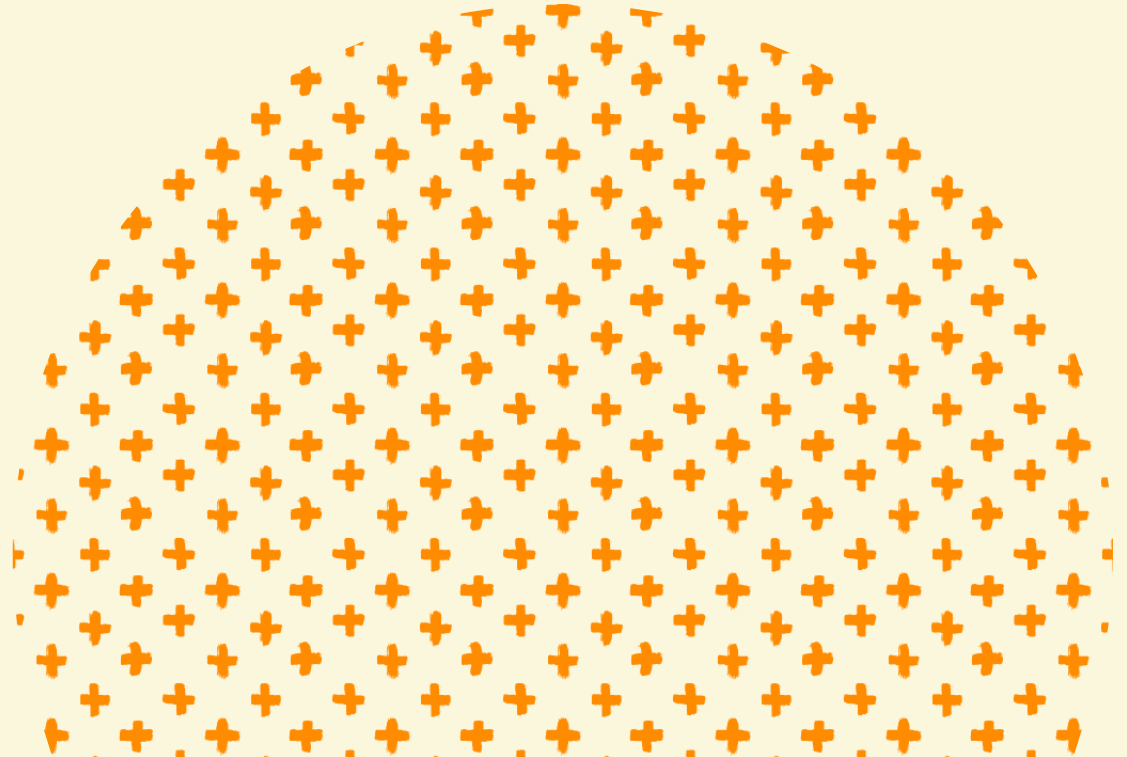


IMPERIAL

Societal Engagement



Thank you









Meet our staff and
find out what goes
on behind the
scenes ...











NYC
AUTHENTIC

BOA CONSTRICTOR

Boas are a type of reptile. They are found in the Americas, Europe, and Africa. They are known for their ability to swallow their prey whole. They are also known for their ability to constrict their prey.

COMMON GREEN IGUANA

This iguana has a pink mouth. It is a common sight in the tropics. It is known for its ability to change color. It is also known for its ability to climb trees.

MONITOR LIZARD

CHAMELEONS

Chameleons don't really change color to blend in with their surroundings. They do it to control their temperature, to attract mates, and to show their feelings. They are also known for their ability to change color.

What am I?





MICROBIOLOGY LAB



DNA



Transformation

TRANSFORMATION



CELL CULTURE



CELL CULTURE



BIOMEDICAL
LAB
Bacteriology (CMB)

