



Making Scientific Information Interesting

Backing up your program with scientific information is often important, but you don't want the material to fly over the heads of your audience, or for them to lose interest and walk away. Here are a few tips to make science more fun and interesting to your audience.

Use an Overriding Analogy

Make your presentation revolve around an analogy. For example, use the analogy of the layers of an onion or a layered towel uplift demonstration to describe geological processes, or an apple's core, center, and skin to describe the composition of planet Earth.

Show Cause and Effect

People like to know what things cause other things to happen. Describe, or show, direct relationships between causes and their effects. Refer to your previous example whenever possible so the audience understands the connection throughout the program. For example, "Remember that blue towel in the demo? Why do you think it ended up where it did after uplift?"

Link Science to People

If your audience can see how scientific knowledge relates to them personally, it becomes more relevant and important to them. For instance, we often call our planet "Mother Earth." Just as a mother knows the best for her children and has had experiences they haven't had, Mother Earth knows best how to take care of its processes and "children," even when the children sometimes think they have other ideas. Or if it's difficult to understand the geologic processes over time, have people think about how long a year felt when you were only five years old—a 30-year-old person seemed ancient! As you get older, you have more time as a comparison and 30 years seems young. If you're a rock, your life span is much longer than human life spans, and you might look at people and see their lifespan the way we see the lifespan of a butterfly.

Use a Visual Metaphor to Describe Complex Ideas

A visual metaphor is an illustration which shows visually what might be difficult to describe with words alone. Use a yard stick to represent the 4.6 billion-year age of the Earth and to indicate when significant geologic events occurred in Boulder County. Or, to demonstrate how much a bear eats before hibernation, calculate the amount of food in terms of bowls of cereal. Set out bowls on the table to show how much cereal a bear would eat every day.

Exaggerate size and time scale

Use these two vehicles to make your topic more interesting-by telling about it in the context of some overriding scene, setting or situation. For example, "Imagine what you would see if you were small enough to actually walk inside an ant hill," or "If time were speeded up so that a thousand years went by every second, you could watch continental drift in one hour!"

Focus on an Individual

Make up a fictitious—but realistic—person or object for your presentation. It can be a person, animal, plant, ice crystal, etc. Describe what this person/object may experience in terms of the technical information you are presenting and refer to the character throughout your presentation! For example, follow a single water drop through the water cycle, or a person (real or imagined) through their life 100 years ago.

People are much more likely to accept scientific information if it's presented in a way they can understand and relate to. Find a way to make science fun!