

# AGU: Develop and deliver a great flash-talk

## *What is a flash-(or lightning) talk*

### **The Basics**

3 minutes to talk  
2 minutes for Q&A  
1 slide to present

A flash talk is a very short presentation lasting only a few minutes, given at a conference or similar forum. Several flash talks are usually delivered by different speakers in succession during a short session. Flash talks are very brief, requiring the speaker to make the point clearly and rid the presentation of non-critical information. The format causes the audience to be more attentive to the speaker and to gain a breadth of information/knowledge from the series of presentations.

### **Deadlines:**

- To sign-up for a talk: **October 31st**
  - <https://goo.gl/forms/Wnvd3HajRLK59KSG3>
- To submit your slide: **November 30th**
  - <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UweeEVAEctwlIomDwKSd1lrk9ZHidUIQ>
  - Name your slide: LastName\_UnitAcronym. For example: Hauer\_ASF.

*\*Contact Aaluk Edwardson with questions: [asedwardson@alaska.edu](mailto:asedwardson@alaska.edu), (907) 319-9218*

*\*Flash talk presenters should be present in the AGU Booth 30 minutes before their talk is set to begin.*

### **What are you trying to convey?**

- what you are doing
- why it is important
- why the audience should care about it (or fund it)

### **What can it look like?**

- a talk
- a story
- a demonstration
- a “preview” for a later lecture

You know the backstory for your research. It’s interesting. Share some of it. **How** you got there is sometimes as compelling as your topic. The details of how you got there are important. Telling people the crazy things you have done creates a human connection.

## Know your audience

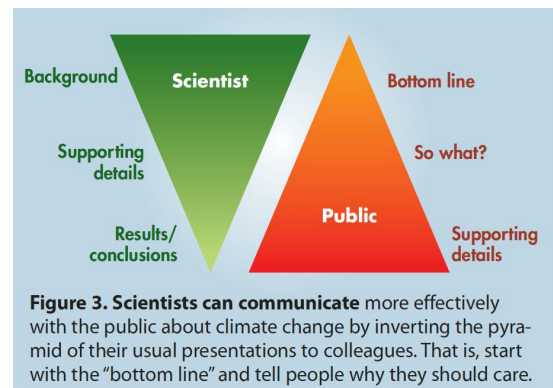
- What do they care about? What do they know? Make it relevant to them.
- Maintain visual contact with the audience. Look for clues indicating whether or not you are connecting with them; whether or not they are listening; adapt to recapture their attention, if necessary.

## Know your goal

- Be very specific about what you want people to take away with them
- Don't try to convey your entire body of knowledge . . . pick a lane and stay in the lines
- Limit the salient points to 3, maybe 4 at most
- Keep your slide simple!

## Distill your message

- Stress meaning, not details (avoid jargon)
- Why does it matter to me? Why does it (or should it) matter to the audience?
- Use everyday language, be clear, conversational
- Start with the bottom line, explain why they should care, then provide supporting details as time allows (See figure, taken from: Somerville, R.C.J. and S.J. Hassol. 2011. Communicating the science of climate change. *Physics Today*, October 2011, pp. 48-53.).



## Make it exciting

- Make it personal, be yourself
- Talk about what is surprising, funny, exciting, difficult, mysterious
- Use examples, analogies, comparisons
- Use concrete, specific language
- Use props and improvisation
- Use comparisons familiar to the targeted audience
- Use vivid (visual) details (words catering to the physical senses)

## Examples:

### Three-Minute Thesis Presentation Winners

- Ashlee Tietje, a PhD student in biological sciences at Clemson University
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-e382qkCLWk>
- Sarah Marshall of Flinders University: 'Deciding the Future of Our Mining Environments'
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYaD-zSbqrk&t=68s>