Effective Writing for Public Policy

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c. How to craft a policy brief
d. Letter writing: How to write a concise & impactful letter to your elected official
I’m going to give you a handful of different approaches for delivering your message. The approaches fall into 2 categories: Strategies and Structures.

(1) Strategies for what you present: How to present your content.
(2) Structures for what you present: How to organize your information.

You can use 1 or more of these when communicating with policymakers or engaging in science policy issues.
Strategies
How to present your content.

(1) Strategies for what you present: Advice on getting your message heard. How to present your content.
(2) Structures for what you present: Advice on what content to present. How to organize your information.
One strategy is use the 3 Ms to guide how you craft the content of your message.

**Miniature** – Present 3 easy to remember key points. These 3 points serve as your outline. Be able to expand on your 3 key points but keep the message short at first.

**Memorable** – Helps the audience to remember your points. Also helps you to remember what you want to convey. Tactics: using alliteration or analogy, for examples.

**Meaningful** – Tailor your message to your audience thereby making it meaningful to them. Or express what it means to you in a way that your story will stick with the audience. Tactic: evoke an emotional response.
Timely – Policymakers mostly want information that is relevant to current policy discussions. What are they debating right now? What do they have to vote on this month? If your work is outside the current discussions, do not be discouraged. If you have some insight that you feel is important to their district that will truly impact their constituents (negatively or positively), they’ll want to know about it. Finally, even though most congressional attention is focused on the here and now, there are leaders who are always looking to stay ahead of emerging or impending environmental and societal issues. You new or recently published results are worth capitalizing on.

Responsive – Journalists and policymakers need you to respond quickly. They know you are busy, but their timelines are much shorter than the academic world’s. “Timing is absolutely critical to us,” says Amber Mace, assistant secretary for coastal matters and executive director of the California Ocean Protection Council. “We are lucky if we get a week or two turnaround time in our work. If scientist are slow to respond or not accessible and we can’t get them on the phone or via email, they just drop down our list. Agreeing to and meeting deadlines is really essential for us.”

Clear – Policy makers appreciate scientists who have taken the time to distill their messages so they can make their points simply and accurately and explain why it matters. Sonken says,” Scientists know a million times more than I ever will on the
SUCCEss Model, Made to Stick by C. & D. Heath

- Simple
- Unexpected
- Concrete
- Credible
- Emotional
- Stories

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Stories
(1) Strategies for what you present: Advice on getting your message heard. How to present your content.

(2) Structures for what you present: Advice on what content to present. How to organize your information.

Circles, triangles, and boxes/squares

Structures
How to organize your information.
Start with Why, by Simon Sinek
Why, How, What

• **Why:** To correct the gender imbalance in engineering,
• **How:** girls need to be encouraged to build things.
• **What:** GoldieBlox creates toys for girls that aren’t just ordinary toys – they’re really engineering tools.

• **Why:** “If we don’t get some control over Alzheimer’s disease, it’s going to bankrupt both Medicare and Medicaid,” says neurobiologist Dr. Potter.
• **How:** To get control over AD and other dementias, we must devote more funding to research of these diseases.
• **What:** Congress should invest $4.5 million in a BRAIN Initiative over the next decade.
Present three points, each with evidence.
Draft out your key assertions.
These could be problem, solution, and benefits.
Or it could be premise, minor premise, and conclusion.
By Daniel C. Agan, Ninja Communications’ Science: Becoming the Messenger.
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I’m not going to examples because the message triangle is similar to the message box.
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According to Nancy Baron
- Explain to nonscientists what you do
- Prepare for interviews
- Refine your 30-second elevator speech for talking to policymakers
- Polish an abstract or cover letter for publication
- Write an effective op-ed or press release
- Storyboard your website

Uses for a Message Box

BOTTOMLINE
- A tool for presenting your work
- Especially helpful when trying to convey importance of your work to those outside your discipline or specialization

http://www.compassionline.org/
Why a message BOX?
The conversation may lead you to speak about your solutions first.
The message box is a way to organize your points so that you can cycle back.
Scope of Information

Issue
Problem
Solution
So What
Benefit
Message Box
Example from Melinda Gormley

Today many people (including members of the general public, policymakers, media) expect scientists and engineers to adhere to the objective rules of science when they enter the political realm. This is not realistic.

A more sophisticated and realistic view of the role of scientists and engineers in policymaking would improve the ability of scientists and engineers to serve society and likely increase this type of service among scientists and engineers.

Scientists and engineers in policymaking process

Scientists can be objective in lab or field while also being passionate about social and political issues.

History tells us that scientists and engineers who participate in the democratic process by fining their first amendment rights and advocating for particular political outcomes can advance political discussions to achieve policy outcomes.
Other points and advice

• Supporting the message.
• Test your message out. Then refine it.
• Dress the part.
Pielke’s 4 roles for scientists in policy arena: Pure scientist, science arbiter, issue advocate, and honest broker
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