

5 Tips for Communicating Climate Change

Adapted from *Connecting on Climate: A Guide to Effective Climate Change Communication* by ecoAmerica & Columbia University

1. Know your audience

People use their past experiences and knowledge to interpret new information. Knowing your audience is key to crafting an effective message.

Questions to ask:

- *Who is your target audience?*
- *What excites your audience?*
- *What is the best communication channel for your audience?*
- *What knowledge do they already have about this topic? What knowledge do they need?*



As a member of an organization (or an active citizen) that works with your audience every day, you are in a great position to know the answers to these questions!

2. Frame your message in a way that resonates with your audience

Framing your message in a way that your audience connects to is important to getting them to care and then take action. For example, focusing on climate change effects on child health could be an effective frame for a parents' group.



Questions to ask:

- *What do you know about audience members' values?*
- *What are your audience's major challenges or concerns?*
- *How can you craft a message around those challenges/ your audience's values that will resonate?*

This is where you can think about your audience's chronic stressors to frame your message!

Pro Tip: Use images! Images help people relate to the message, understand concepts, and retain information.



3. Use networks and groups

Evidence shows that when people interact with each other as part of a group, they may be more inclined to promote outcomes that are good for the group rather than those that are only personally beneficial.

Questions to ask:

- *How can I integrate messages about climate change into existing groups and activities in my organization or networks?*
- *What other partner organizations/groups should we be working with to engage your organization's target audience?*

This is part of the reason we are reaching out to you and why integrating climate communication into your own organization's activities is so important!

4. Be positive and emphasize actions and solutions

A common mistake when communicating about climate change is focusing only on the negative consequences without communicating steps individuals and communities can take to make a difference and how those steps can lead to a positive, vibrant future. Without the latter, people can feel depressed and overwhelmed— and unmotivated to act.

Questions to ask:

- *Does your strategy highlight solutions and actions people can take on an individual or community level instead of just focusing on the problem?*
- *Is your message hopeful and positive?*
- *Can you provide successful examples?*

You can link this back to your network and group (Tip 3) by highlighting what steps your organization is taking. Frame how the individual actions contribute to the collective movement.

5. Focus locally and in the present

People have a hard time connecting to issues that they see as happening far away (both geographically or and in the distant future). To make climate change relevant, connect it to recent, personal experiences in your city (e.g., a recent major storm or a series of very hot days) and use stories and visuals.

Question to ask:

- *Are you focusing on the ways climate change is already impacting your audience's lives via stories, experiences, and visuals?*
- *What are the steps people can take today?*

