How do you give the talk?

Disclaimer (Hester-92): these are my tips and tricks to anyone who finds something useful in them. It’s about the basics and sometimes you can find my personal opinion in here. If some parts do not have your preference; just skip them. If you want to add more and/or different tips; please do!

**This document touches on the following topics:**

**1. General tips for giving the talk**

**2. Basic tips for public speaking**

**3. Preparation tips**

You have an **important role as a speaker** and how you present the XR content. The talk can even be the difference for people to join or not to join. The talk is an important opportunity to inform and activate people, but at the same time it can also be overwhelming and paralyzing. You can help the audience through this (potential) emotional rollercoaster of a presentation. You are the person who guides new people into the direction of wanting to take action, wanting to participate in XR. Them getting a better understanding of the science is an important part of this. But letting them *feel* why they should join XR is just as (or maybe even more) powerful as letting them *know* why. And if people don’t feel that much during the presentation, they can at least concentrate better when informed in a pleasant way ☺

# 1. General tips for giving the talk

- **Be well prepared**! (See part 3 for tips on this.) People have taken the time to come and listen to you; you owe it to them. For you as a speaker, it gives you the confidence and opportunity to focus on more than just the content of the talk. You can be more aware of how you are speaking and your audience’s needs (*do they need a break? Is it too hot/cold in the room? Are there questions?*).

It also helps with good time management. When you know how long certain subparts of the talk usually/should take, you can adjust when necessary. And you only know what you can (and want to) compress or skip, if you know the content and order very well!

- **Make the talk more interactive**. Involve the people more by asking questions every now and then. They will feel seen and heard. It also helps greatly with keeping them focused: when you ask a few questions in the beginning, they know they can expect more of them, but they don’t know when, so they will pay more attention.

Examples: *Who here already knew the IPCC? What else is so problematic about the hurricanes in Mozambique? How many of you have already been involved in activism? After hearing all this, how are you feeling?* Etc.

-**Take a few moments to connect with them and with each other**. In the beginning, after giving them a warm welcome, you can ask a few questions to get to know your audience. *How many of you have already been involved in activism? Are you here mostly for the science part or the XR part? What was your motivation to come here?* You can also let them share answers with their neighbors, and then let one or two people share with the entire group. It is also nice to share why you joined XR and what it means to you.

The moment after the 1 minute of silence can be great for letting the people share their thoughts and feelings. Again, it can be with their neighbor or with the entire group. You as a speaker can also share shortly what it still does to you. This moment can be about acknowledging them and their thoughts and feelings, before continuing to the second part of the talk. Depending on what has been shared, maybe some people could use a short break, to pop outside for a second or to go to the bathroom. Even if it is for 2 minutes, it also helps to boost their concentration. With a quick check on the audience, you know what they need.

After the talk, you can repeat the same sharing moment (or a variation on it) as after the minute of silence, mentioned above. They have had to process a large amount of information, and probably some heavy emotions as well. Before diving into the questions, which is more information, it might be nice to make a connection again.

🡪 If you want to put some time in for these moments, decide for yourself what slides you can compress or skip. 5-10 minutes less of the talk and more of the *connecting* will probably be worth it to get new people to join XR.

**-When you notice you don’t have enough time for the entire talk**. Usually you will probably notice this halfway, because the talk is in two parts. But it is much better to notice earlier on, so you can make adjustments right away.

It is not about you as a speaker; it is about your audience. You can check in the beginning why people came to the talk. Do they want to know more about the science, or about XR, or both? If the majority in the room predominantly came to hear more about XR, then make sure you do not need to cut back on the second part of the talk due to lack of time. They do not have control of the content or the time management, so you need to look after their needs and the XR message.

# 2. Basic tips for public speaking

PVFEG 🡪 **Posture, Voice, Face, Eyes, Gestures**

These are the five elements with which you manage the **energy** you transfer to the people listening. You (probably) want to come across as confident, open, relaxed, and well prepared, and sometimes concerned, and serious.

Posture: stand up straight, put back your shoulders, unlock your knees, put your feet hip-width apart, and let your arms hang relaxed when not making gestures while speaking. Make sure your upper body is facing the audience, for an open posture. Do not cross your arms or put your hands in your pockets: then you are closed off and are creating unwanted distance.

Voice: How are you using your voice? You can say the same sentence in at least 50 differences ways, if you use your voice differently. Think of your volume, tone, rhythm, pace, which words to emphasize, and when to use a meaningful silence or a pause. Use your prosody wisely! *Your what?* It is how you use your voice to give meaning to the words you are saying. Julian Treasure demonstrates very clearly what you can do with your voice, that you can’t really write down: “how to speak so that people want to listen”, from 4:20 on, a couple of minutes:

<https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_how_to_speak_so_that_people_want_to_listen#t-252496>

Do not forget to **breathe**. It is noticeable when someone speaks too tensely: fast pace, voice high in throat, less intonation, no relaxed face. You can always take a second to take a breath: people will think you are thoughtfully placing a thinking pause for yourself, or a meaningful silence for them to let your words sink in.

Taking a second to breathe or to create a meaningful pause is much more effective and pleasant than filling up everything with **“uhm,” “so,” “yeah” “basically**,”.

Face: When should you be looking friendly and open, and when should you be looking serious or concerned, or surprised? You do not need to make the talk a theater piece, but your face (along with your voice and gestures) can tell the audience the emotion or meaning of what you are saying.

Eyes: Are you making enough eye-contact with the audience or are you constantly reading from the screen because it makes you feel safe? Try to engage everyone in the room by looking at them. Do not do this for too long with one person, that is very intense. Without being aware of it, some people tend to direct their presentation with their eyes to only a couple of people in the middle and forget people in the back or at the sides. When someone is asking a question or sharing something, look them in the eye.

Gestures: Use hand gestures to emphasize your words and give more meaning to them. Keep some variation in your gestures, with your hands, head and arms. When you know very well what you will be saying (next), then you know what is important to stress, and you usually do that naturally with your voice or with your gestures. When you want them to look at an image or graph, or a specific part of that, point to it and look at it. The audience will automatically follow your eyes and hands. When you want so say something very important about what you are pointing at, look back at the audience when you say this. It will engage them to focus on your words and expression for a second instead of the image/graph.

# 3. Preparation tips

Preparation is everything! People have taken the time to come and listen to you; you owe it to them. For you as a speaker, it gives you the confidence and opportunity to focus on more than just the content of the talk. You can be more aware of how you are speaking and your audience’s needs (*do they need a break? Is it too hot/cold in the room? Are there questions?*).

-**Go through the slides along with the speaker notes** for a couple of times. The information and order of it first needs to sink in with you before you can practice presenting it. If you absolutely do not understand certain parts, ask someone to explain it to you, or look it up. If you have no clue of what you are saying, people will notice. Of course, you do not need to understand everything on expert level and you can give a disclaimer in the beginning, but there is a noticeable distinction between the two different levels of understanding that the audience can pick up on and you might lose credibility.

-**Practice (parts of) the talk in front of a** **full-length mirror**. What body language, facial expressions and gestures do you see yourself using, and during which part of the talk? How are you Is it appropriate to the content or can you make it stronger/more convincing?

-Think of what kind of **questions** you would like to ask the audience, and when. Build them in your practice.

-After preparing yourself, show (a bit of) the presentation **in front of someone** **else**. Maybe your speaker-buddy for the presentation? Ask them for feedback about the 5 elements (PVFEG, see part 2). A great way to give yourself feedback is to **record a bit** and look at it. It can be funny and awkward to see yourself like that, but then you can see right away what you might be able to improve.

-When you really have the content down, decide (with your speaker buddy) **which parts you can compress or skip** if you are getting short on time.

-(Not everyone might agree:) If you need a **little cheat sheet** with a couple of words to give you more confidence; bring it with you. Do not hold it during the presentation but keep it nearby for when you are completely blanking or quickly want to check the order. You will notice you’ll need it less every time or not at all. Your speaker buddy of course can help you out as well!