

# HOW TO... SHARE AND PROMOTE YOUR RESEARCH

Public engagement can be intimidating and it is tempting to leave it to professors and professional communicators. But **Anastasia Skamarauskas** from **Sense about Science** says that standing up for science and being part of the public discussion is the responsibility of all researchers.

**Public engagement has changed immeasurably in the last decade.** No longer just the domain of specialists, it has a place throughout the research community. Part of the Research Excellence Framework, the focus of awards and of increasing importance within universities; the career benefits can be substantial. But what about the public? Is it worth your while talking about your work and the world of scientific research? A common qualifier is “I don’t have time”. And it’s fair; PhDs are not an easy endeavour and “there will be someone else who can give that interview, right?” That’s a pretty risky strategy. If it’s

your research, someone else might not do it justice.

**So, how do you talk to the public about research?** How do you make it understandable and how do you make people care? A simple way is to answer their questions. Sense about Science hosts regular Reddit AMAs. A researcher from our plant science panel picks a particular topic (for example, GM wheat), and invites people to ask them anything. Then for an hour, they answer as many questions as possible.



But don’t just stay at a computer screen, go out and talk to people too. Interest groups or organised evenings like Skeptics in the Pub are a great way to start.

**What about policymakers?** For a lot of researchers and indeed the general public, politicians and policymakers can seem like an impossible group to reach. One way to engage with them is through select committee inquiries. There are Science and Technology committees for the Houses of Lords and Commons that scrutinise government policy. When an inquiry is announced you can submit evidence, which is later published. You might even get invited to provide evidence in person.

**How do you reach a wider audience?** An aim of a lot of public engagement is to talk to those who don’t seek out science on their own. Newspapers, TV and radio are a great way to get to a much bigger pool of people, and making your research relatable is key to capturing people’s interest. Local radio stations and newspapers are a friendly place to start; and stories can be picked up by national news. It can be intimidating to go straight to journalists, so your university or society press officer is a really useful person to speak to first. They can prepare you for interviews and will have a network of contacts to work from.

**Want to start standing up for science?** Come along to our Sense about Science media workshop. You’ll meet journalists and get great insights from press officers and media-savvy researchers. Workshops are free for early-career researchers, and IBMS members get priority places. The next workshop is on 22 September at the University of Edinburgh. Go to [bit.ly/VoYSEdinburgh](http://bit.ly/VoYSEdinburgh) to apply. 

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