

# Using Storytelling to Advocate for Your Science

## Know Before You Go: Visiting a Congressional Office

-  **Find your legislator and their contact information**  
Look up your representative, and explore their background.
-  **Schedule the meeting**  
Call your representative's office and speak to the scheduler, complete the visitor form on their website, or reach out via email and follow up as needed.
-  **Practice, practice, practice**  
Research your representative and their areas of interest or committee assignments. Practice your story, craft your ask, and be prepared for questions.
-  **Know what to expect**  
Once the meeting is scheduled, staff will likely confirm who you'll be meeting with. Be on time and bring any relevant materials for further reading.
-  **Follow-up**  
Write a thank you note (you can do this via email) and include relevant resources and answers to any outstanding questions from your meeting. Continue to touch base to build relationships.

### Stories can...



Increase the likelihood that your audience remembers the information



Reduce counter arguments



Make people empathize or feel as if the situation you're describing was their own  
Be more



convincing than data alone



Increase engagement when communicating science with non-scientists

Cormick, C. (2019). Who doesn't love a good story?—What neuroscience tells about how we respond to narratives. *Journal of Science Communication*, 18(5), Y01.

# Craft Your Story + Ask

Planning a conversation with a legislator is different from how you might go about preparing for any other conversation because there is an “ask” involved. You’re not alone if this feels a little weird. Don’t worry, this is normal and expected during visits from constituents. The best thing you can do for yourself and for your conversation is to plan ahead. Let’s get started:

**Begin with the end and know your audience. What are you asking of your representative? Is your ask relevant to their constituents? Be sure you can articulate not just why this issue is important, but what makes it specifically relevant to them.**

This is where your research comes in handy. Is your representative on a relevant committee? Is this something that could impact their local community or future elections? Is this something with potential economic benefits to your area?

**Do you have a personal experience you’re willing to share that is relevant to the issue you’re meeting with your representative about? Consider times you might have faced a tough decision, challenging moment, or unexpected outcome.**

Remember: Only share stories that are yours to share. If you don’t have a relevant experience to share, consider if there is someone in your community that could attend the meeting with you who has a story they might be willing to share.

**Next, once you’ve identified the story you want to tell. Give it some structure. What points mark the beginning, middle or climax, and conclusion of the story?**

This step is a good opportunity to start outlining your story.

**Now, set the scene. Include sensory details and pertinent information.** Consider how you might infuse critical data points but only include 1-2 so that data bolsters your story rather than distracts.

**Refine your story. What jargon can you remove? Where could you simplify? If you have to use technical terminology, be sure to explain it in plain language that would be accessible to a non-scientific audience.** Practice with someone you trust and ask for feedback. Consider practicing with someone who isn’t a scientist.

**How will you conclude your story and elevate your ask?** Remember to keep your story succinct, and to end on a note that underscores the urgency and relevance of your ask.