

# Effective Writing for Public Policy

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Effective Writing for Public Policy

c. How to craft a policy brief

d. Letter writing: How to write a concise & impactful letter to your elected official

# Delivering your message

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.

## 3Ms from AAAS's *Communicating Science: Fundamentals for Public Engagement*

### Miniature

- Present 3 easy to remember key points.
- These 3 points serve as your outline.
- Be able to expand on your 3 key points.

### Memorable

- Helps the audience to remember your points.
- Helps you to remember what you want to convey.
- Tactics: using alliteration or analogy, for examples.

### Meaningful

- Tailor your message to your audience.
- Express what it means to you.
- Tactic: evoke an emotional response.

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.

## Make your science useful, *Escape from the Ivory Tower* by Nancy Baron

<b>Timely</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policymakers mostly want info relevant to current discussions. Some look to stay ahead of emerging or impending environmental and societal issues.</li></ul>
<b>Responsive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You need to respond quickly. Their timelines are much shorter than the academic world's. Agreeing to and meeting deadlines is essential.</li></ul>
<b>Clear</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distill your messages so you make points simply and accurately. Explain why it matters.</li></ul>
<b>Actionable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You want policymakers to agree that something must be done. What is that "something"? Prepare to explain the consequences of various choices.</li></ul>
<b>Local</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connect issues to a policymaker's district. Some may be interested in global-scale issues. All want to know about a finding affecting their constituents.</li></ul>
<b>Confident</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present your responses with confidence. It's okay to represent uncertainty; policymakers can deal with uncertainty.</li></ul>

**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. Your 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 scientists 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

**MADE to STICK**  
**SUCCESS Model**

A sticky idea is understood, it's remembered, and it changes something. Sticky ideas of all kinds—ranging from the “kidney thieves” urban legend to JFK’s “Man on the Moon” speech—have six traits in common. If you make use of these traits in your communication, you’ll make your ideas stickier. (You don’t need all 6 to have a sticky idea, but it’s fair to say the more, the better!)

PRINCIPLE 1	PRINCIPLE 2	PRINCIPLE 3	PRINCIPLE 4	PRINCIPLE 5	PRINCIPLE 6
<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
<b>SIMPLE</b>	<b>UNEXPECTED</b>	<b>CONCRETE</b>	<b>CREDIBLE</b>	<b>EMOTIONAL</b>	<b>STORIES</b>
Simplicity isn’t about dumbing down; it’s about prioritizing. (Gandhi once will be THE low-fare airline.) What’s the core of your message? Can you communicate it with an analogy or high-concept pitch?	To get attention, violate a schema. (The Noodle who invented a chain... To hold attention, use contrary gaps. (What are history’s traps made of?) Before your message can stick, your audience has to want it.	To be concrete, use sensory language. (Think Aesop’s fables.) Place a mental picture. (A man on the moon...) Remember the “Victims theory of memory—try to hook into multiple types of memory.	Ideas can get credibility from outside (authorities or past authorities) or from within, using human-made statistics or vivid details. Let people “try before they buy.” (Where’s the Beef?)	People care about people, not numbers. (Remember Rickie.) Don’t forget the WHY? (What’s In It For You). Use identity appropriate often, using self-interest. (That’s Mean With Texas” spoke to Rickie’s identity.)	Stories drive action through simulation (what to do) and inspiration (the motivation to do it). Think Javel, Springboard stories (See Dreaming a World Bank tale help people see how an existing problem might change).

www.MADEtoSTICK.com

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# Structures

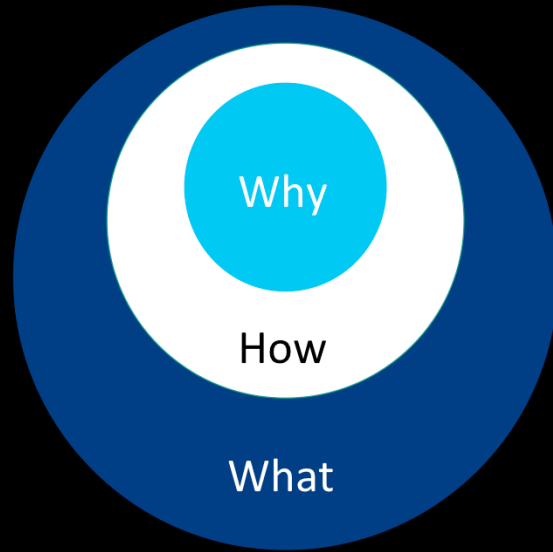
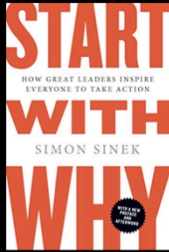
How to organize your information.

(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

*Start with Why*, by  
Simon Sinek

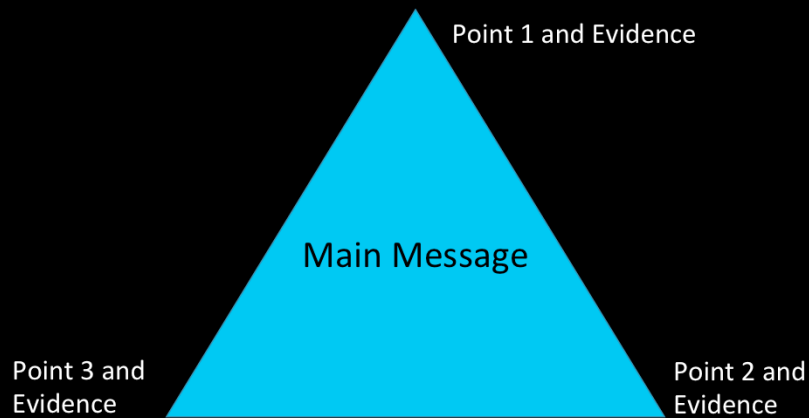




## Why, How, What

- 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.

## Message Triangle by Daniel C. Agan of Ninja Communications



Present three points, each with evidence.

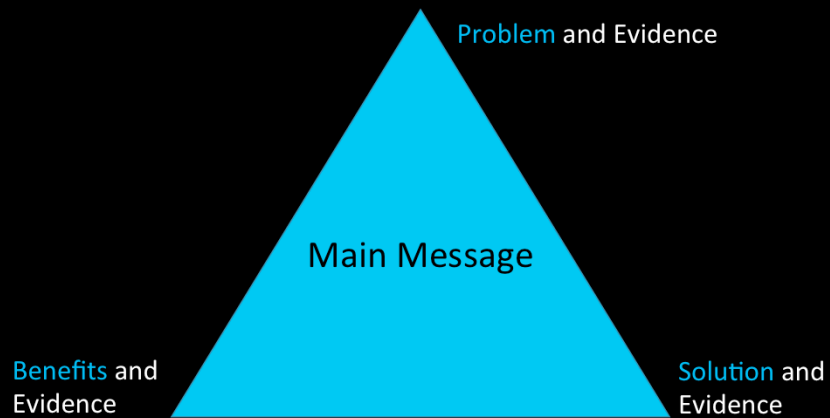
Draft out your key assertions.

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.

## Message Triangle by Daniel C. Agan of Ninja Communications



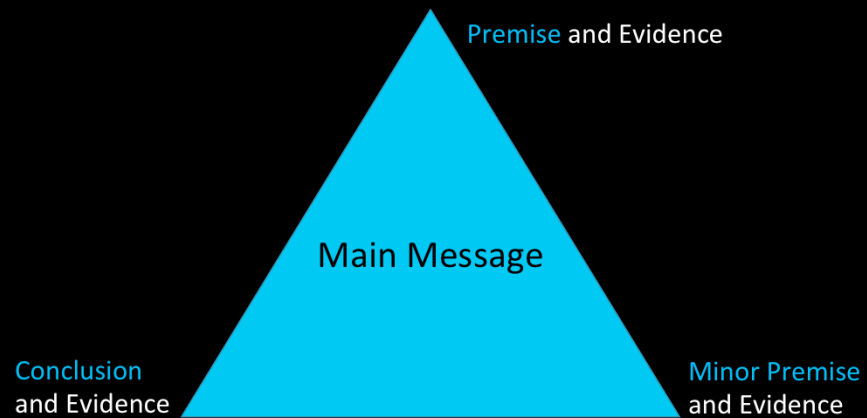
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I'm not going to examples because the message triangle is similar to the message box.

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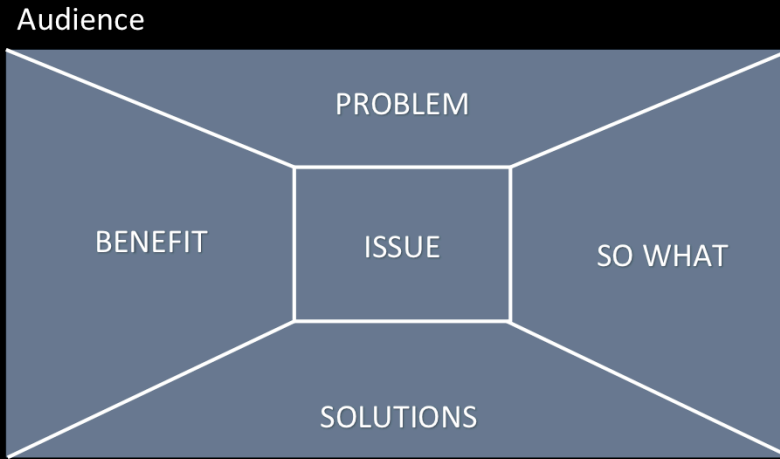
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MESSAGE BOX



*Escape from the Ivory Tower* by Nancy Baron (p. 108)  
<http://www.compassonline.org/>

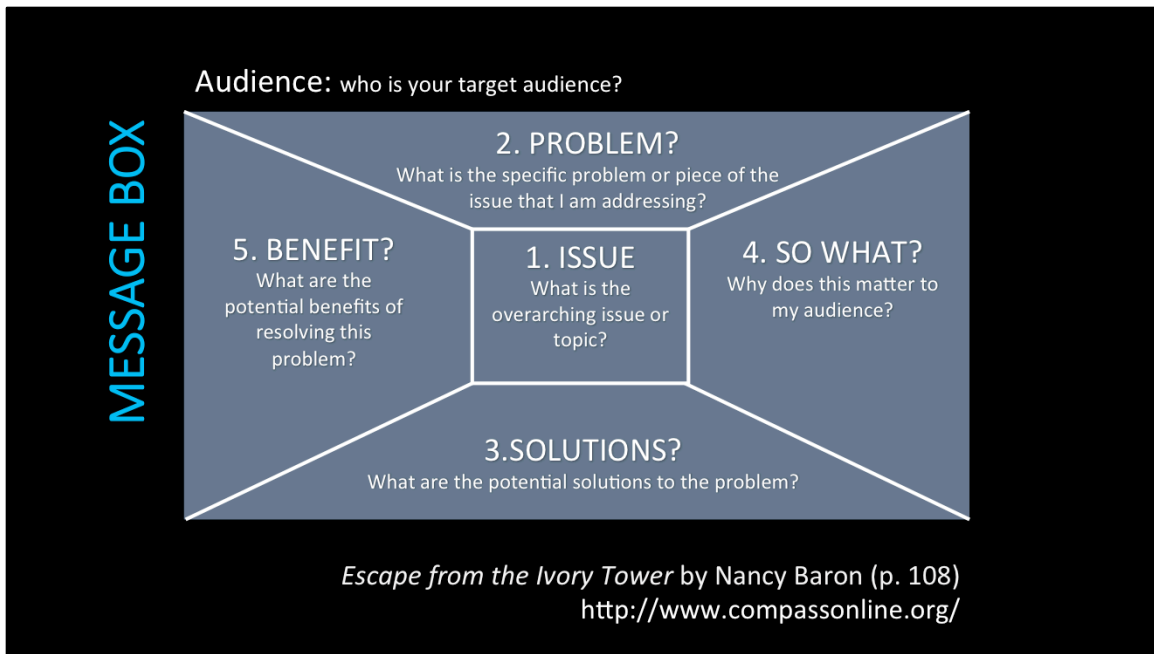
- According to Nancy Baron
  - Explain to nonscientists what you do
  - Prepare for interviews
  - Refine your 30-second elevator speech for talking to policymakers
  - Polish an abstract or cover letter for publication
  - Write an effective op-ed or press release
  - Storyboard your website

*From Escape from the Ivory Tower:  
A Guide to Making Your Science Matter  
by Nancy Baron (page 108)  
<http://www.compassonline.org/>*

## 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

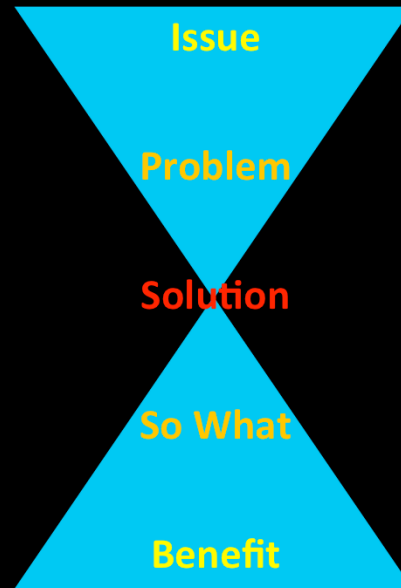


Why a message BOX?

The conversation may lead you to speak about your solutions first.

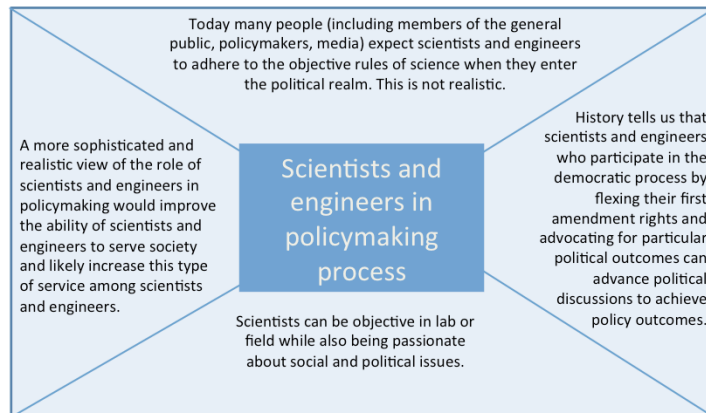
The message box is a way to organize your points so that you can cycle back

Scope of Information





## Message Box Example from Melinda Gormley

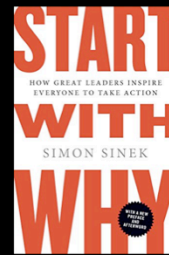
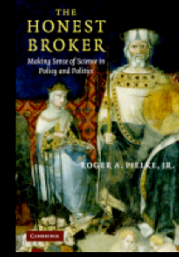
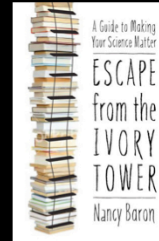


## Other points and advice

- Supporting the message.
- Test your message out. Then refine it.
- Dress the part.

## Resources

- *Escape from the Ivory Tower: A Guide to Making Your Science Matter* by Nancy Baron (2010)
- *The Honest Broker* by Roger A. Pielke, Jr. (2007)
- *Code of Conduct for Advocacy in Science* by Nicholas Steneck (2013)
  - [aaas.org/news/workshop-summary-grapples-advocacy-science](http://aaas.org/news/workshop-summary-grapples-advocacy-science)
- *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* by C. Heath and D. Heath (2007)
- *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* by Simon Sinek (2009)
  - [ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action](http://ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action)



Pielke's 4 roles for scientists in policy arena: Pure scientist, science arbiter, issue advocate, and honest broker

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