

Finding Speakers for Your Science Café or Science Seminar

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- Make a list of local places where you can find potential speakers. These include colleges, universities, science museums, research institutes, hospitals, public works facilities, federal programs (like NASA), other local science cafes, zoos, and private industry. Create a bookmark folder in your web browser of local places to target and another for potential speakers. Sometimes using people you or others know (parents) works too! Local science cafes can be super helpful as you can get advice from their organizers as to who is an especially good speaker. You can find one at <http://www.sciencecafes.org/find/>
- Be clear about what kind of speaker you want. We only want working scientists, programmers, engineers, mathematicians, and medical professionals. Beware of people offering to speak who are simply industry spokespeople without technical backgrounds, and of people who are primarily speaking for a political or personal agenda. We have had to politely turn down a number of people who came to us wanting to speak.
- Develop a customizable boiler-plate email/letter introducing your program. Include where & when it takes place, who its intended audience is, who is sponsoring the event and any recompense you offer (optional, but even a little goody bag is appreciated). Customize it for the person or location you are targeting. Mention individual research or activities, where applicable. Have a blog or website and/or Facebook page to which they can refer for more information.
- Google potential speakers and see if you can find any YouTube or other multimedia suggesting that they have experience with public speaking. It's not necessary, but experienced speakers are, well, more experienced. For your first few speakers, you may want experienced people to gain confidence. You'll be able to tell whether you want others to return once they speak. :)
- Offer speakers a choice of dates (see the MSS website for tips on what dates to offer - <http://www.marinsscienceseminar.com/teachers.html> Look under "Book dates" in the left column).
- If you don't hear back, try again. Let a week pass by after the initial email contact, and then try again with an updated subject line and opening paragraph to let them know you are checking in again. If you are really determined, you can try calling, but I usually just email.
- If you have questions about any of this, feel free to email me at the address above. Enjoy.