

**Communicating
Science to
Young People**
– A Quick Guide

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Why is Science Communication Tailored to Young People Important?



Young people have the right to access information that is clear, understandable, and resonates with them¹; this includes scientific research. Furthermore, young people should be able to voice their thoughts and perspectives as well as influence how research concerning them is communicated in media publicity and in other contexts.

There are many ways to communicate research to young audiences, such as age-appropriate summaries, school visits, in-person and virtual presentations at schools, visual presentations, podcasts, and short-form videos for social media. This quick guide offers tips to help any researcher share their work directly with young people.

Who is This Quick Guide For?

This quick guide is written for researchers in the social sciences and humanities who wish to communicate their research to young people aged 13 to 18 years. It provides a checklist to support the planning and implementation of youth-oriented science communication. The tips in this guide are based on the experiences of researchers and insights drawn from interviews conducted with young people during the ACElife research project², which explored the views of young individuals on science communication. The quotes included in the guide are excerpts from these interviews. In addition, the guide is inspired by a science communication manual published by Terre des Hommes Netherlands³.

Crafting messages for young audiences requires careful consideration of the target audience, and the best results are achieved when young people are involved in developing the communication. However, this is not always possible. Thus, **this guide focuses on low-threshold means of communicating completed research to young individuals**, as we believe that even small actions can help bridge research and the everyday realities of young people.

Different Forms of Youth-Oriented Science Communication

- Summaries, long-form text (e.g., blog posts), nonfiction books
- Informational leaflets, flyers, and posters
- Infographics
- Image posts on social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest) and image carousels
- Short videos (e.g., Instagram Reels and TikToks), long videos (e.g., YouTube videos), documentaries, podcasts
- Lectures, presentations, and visits (e.g., school visit)
- Animations, comic strips
- Interactive activities (e.g., quizzes, games, and workshops)



¹ See Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

² www.ancelife.fi/en

³ Terre des Hommes Netherlands: [Writing Child-friendly Versions of Research and Evaluation Reports.](#)

Keep Your Audience and Ethics Top of Mind

Researchers inevitably engage in societal discussions about youth. Therefore, considering both the target audience and the relevant ethical perspectives is an inextricable component of science communication. Young people are aware of media discussions concerning them and desire communication that critically addresses youth-related worries, concerns, and media panics.

Young people should be able to access ethical research information regarding their lives in easily comprehensible modes and formats. Creating youth-friendly communication of research findings is valuable societal engagement—it helps young people understand society and may encourage them to express their views and take the initiative.

The general principles of communication apply to youth-oriented communication; however, knowing the audience and maintaining ethical integrity are especially important. Tailoring the message to the needs and age level of young people makes the information more accessible and engaging. Identify the findings in your research that might be particularly interesting from a young person’s perspective. In addition, consider that youth-targeted communication is useful on a broader scale, as clear and well-structured communication also appeals to adults.

Taking age level into account also means scoping the topic to ensure that the communication does not cause harm to young people. This is especially important when addressing difficult subjects such as violence. Although such topics may and should be communicated, the tone must be carefully considered, and where possible, hope and the possibility of change should be emphasized. Young people appreciate factual, direct, and empathetic navigation of difficult issues, as well as the researcher’s genuine desire to make a difference.

“You have to make us believe that you [researchers] aren’t just doing this because it’s your job, but because you truly want to change something.”

Once you know what you want to communicate to young people, think about the format, channel, and how you want to express the message. Reflect on your communication style and the specific style of expression that feels natural to you. Recognizing your own strengths and areas of expertise is helpful, but it's also good to step outside your comfort zone and experiment with new forms of expression.

Social media platforms such as TikTok are currently the most important news source for young people⁴. Therefore, social media should not be excluded from science communication. Public discussions often focus on concerns about misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, hate speech, and addictive potential. Although these perspectives are important, we too often overlook the preferences and media habits of young people. Young people themselves hope that discussions about social media are multifaceted and that their thoughts are heard and their perspectives respected.

"I kind of feel like the older generation thinks we're really dumb, like we'd fall for all those stupid TikTok challenges."

Social media platforms operate on the logic of the attention economy, favoring provocative and often misleading clickbait titles and fake news. By participating in social media discussions, researchers have the opportunity to challenge false and misleading communication by sharing reliable, research-based information. This can have a significant impact on young people by enhancing their understanding and expanding their media literacy.

⁴ Nuoret ja uutismediasuhde Survey 2025.

“It’s really helpful to see content that objectively shows what science says is true. It can help many people understand and process things better.”



Young people prefer discovering research-based information through social media and at school

Over 80 % of Finnish youths (aged 16 to 24 years) report using a social media. When used appropriately, social media is a free and effective way to reach young people, regardless of location. It also empowers young people as recipients of communication, as they can choose what content to engage with and for how long.

“You can reach so many young people with it, because probably all of them use TikTok.”

School offers a suitable environment familiar to both young people and researchers. In comprehensive schools especially, the students represent diverse backgrounds and life situations, making face-to-face interaction between researchers and a varied population of young people possible. At its best, science communication in schools is mutual and interactive—not just traditional lecturing.

“I think it’s interesting when someone comes to school to talk and explain things. At least then the young people are actually present.”

Practical Tips and Tools for Youth-Oriented Science Communication

1. Focus on the Findings Most Relevant to Young People

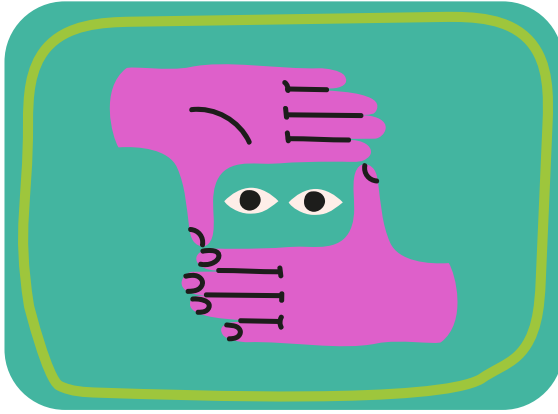
- Summarize the core of your research in a few sentences that capture what was studied, why, how, and what was discovered.
- Support your message with examples or storytelling.
- Consider using AI tools to help rewrite your text to match your target audience. Sample prompts: “Rewrite the research summary so it’s easily understandable for 13–18-year-olds.” or “Create a script for a one-minute social media video based on the summary, aimed at 13–18-year-olds.”

2. Choose the Right Communication Channels and Formats

- Go where young people already are—don’t expect them to come to you. Schools and social media are the most effective places to reach them.
- You can communicate your research through text, images, video, or audio. Consider publishing your message in several different formats.
- In short-form content, include a link, QR code, or some other reference to additional information—such as the original research paper or report.

3. Make the Language Understandable

- Consider the age range of the young people you want to reach. If the age range is broad, use language that is easily comprehensible, even to the youngest in the age group.
- Use concise, age-appropriate language. Favor short sentences.
- Explain complex terms and concepts. Add a glossary if needed.
- Take into account any special needs your target audience might have. Use plain language and provide multilingual translations if necessary.



4. Use Visuals and Ensure Clear Structure

Text and Images

- Enrich your text with images, diagrams, and colors that invite reading and viewing.
- Break the text into small sections using subheadings, text boxes, and bullet points.
- Choose a clear font and an easily readable font size—at least 12 pts.
- Feel free to use templates and design tools (e.g., Canva, and PowerPoint).

Video

- Ensure that your video has a distinct beginning, middle, and end.
- Combine visuals, audio, and text—this supports comprehension and reaches different types of learners.
- Experiment with audio elements (e.g., voice-over, music, and sound effects).
- In short videos, the first second is crucial. Make it count.

5. Pay Attention to Tone and Manner of Speaking

- Reflect on the image your message delivers about young people. Avoid alarmism, stereotypes, or condescending language.
- Be respectful and empathetic when addressing difficult topics. Focus on facts and emphasize hope and the possibility of change.
- If you communicate via social media, also engage in the comments section. Respond and react to comments, and moderate the discussion as needed.

6. Request Feedback and Adjust Your Approach if Needed

- You can request feedback from young people involved in your research or from youth in your personal network. Stakeholders who work with young people are another potential source of valuable insights.
- On social media, metrics such as views, likes, and comments can serve as indicators of how well your message is received.

7. Share Your Message Widely

- Even great communication is meaningless if no one sees it. Share your content with young people who might be interested.
- Remember to communicate your findings to the young people who participated in your research.

Researcher – Young People Glossary

To consult	>	Ask, chat
To analyze	>	Examine, explore in more detail
To implement	>	Put into practice

Examples of Research Language Tailored to Youth

The research objective was to examine young people's experiences of school bullying.	>	The study aimed to explore what young people think about bullying at school.
The results suggest that...	>	From the results, we can tell that...
The study demonstrates that youth involvement enhances well-being.	>	Based on the study findings, when young people are involved, they feel better.



Science Communication in Seconds: Tips for Short Videos

Short-form video is familiar to young people due to their everyday social media use. That's why it's also a natural medium for them to receive research-based information. For example, TikTok is largely based on short videos. Even if filming a short video about research feels intimidating, it's worth giving it a try.

1. Being concise is key

Choose one clear message per video. A good length for a short video is 15–60 seconds.

2. Be yourself

You don't need to act like a trendy influencer. Young people appreciate an expert who speaks casually in their own style.

3. Short videos come in many forms

If you don't want to appear on camera, you can use illustrations, animation, subtitles, or a voice-over. The style can be visual, explanatory, or narrative.

4. A smartphone or computer is enough

You don't need a studio or editing software. There are tutorial videos online to help you get started.

5. Direct interested viewers to long-form content

Include a link or reference to the original research paper, the project's website, a longer video, or a podcast on the topic.

An example of a scientific article summary for young people

What Do Children Worry About?

Link: <https://doi.org/10.30668/janus.146030>

Researchers: Hakala, V., Laajasalo, T., Stenvall, E., Mielityinen, L., & Ellonen, N.

Article title and publication: Lasten huolet ja avun tarpeet tukea tarjoavassa chat-palvelussa. [Children's Worries and Needs for Help in a Supportive Chat Service] Janus Sosiaalipolitiikan ja sosiaalityön Tutkimuksen Aikakauslehti [Janus – Journal of Social Policy and Social Work Research] 33(2), 169–190.



What is the study about?

The researchers wanted to find out what kinds of issues young people discuss in Apuu-chat, an online service where children can confidentially talk with an adult if something is troubling them.



What data was used?

The study examined **over 40,000 conversations** from 2021–2023. The researchers did not read the chat conversations, but analyzed forms filled out by the chat workers. These forms summarized the themes discussed, the type of help offered to the child, and how the conversation went overall.



What do children talk about in the chat?

Children discuss a wide range of topics, such as:



- **Mood and coping**
- **Friendships and relationships**
- **Family and home situations**

Some concerns are ordinary and related to growing up. However, the chat also covers serious issues, including:



- **Mental health problems**
- **Suicidal thoughts**
- **Violence**



How does the chat help?

Often it is enough that an adult listens to the child's worries. A chat worker may also **encourage the child to share their concerns with a friend or a trusted adult. Workers can inform children about their rights and different services** that might be helpful in the situation.

Sometimes children tell about serious, dangerous or harmful situations in the chat. In such cases, the chat worker contacts emergency services or a social worker. This happened in about **3% of the conversations**.



Why is a supportive chat service important?

The chat is especially helpful for children who:

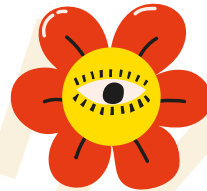
- Do not want or are unable to talk about their worries with adults they know
- Do not consider their concerns serious enough to seek formal help
- Are difficult to reach through traditional means

A Roadmap for Youth-Oriented Science Communication



Summarize Research Clearly

Briefly explain what was studied, why, and how it was done, and outline the findings. Focus on aspects that are most relevant or interesting to young people, and use clear, simple language.



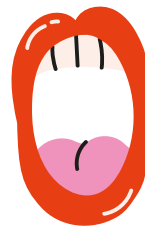
Know Your Audience

Consider the age group you want to reach, and choose your language, tone, and channels accordingly. Consider accessibility and the specific needs of your target audience.



Choose an Appropriate Format and Channel

Communicate through text, images, video, audio—or a combination of these. Share your content where young people already are, such as on social media or in schools.



Test, Improve, and Share

Ask for feedback from young people or professionals who work with them, and make changes if needed. Distribute your content widely on platforms popular with young people.