

Crafting an Effective Advocacy Message



Follow these 6 steps to create a concise, strong advocacy message for any audience.

1. Open with a statement that engages your audience.

Make a statement that gets your audience's attention right away, perhaps using a dramatic fact. This is your lead-in and should be only a sentence or two.

2. Present the problem.

Describe the problem, who it affects, its impact.

3. Provide facts, data about the problem.

Data is important to demonstrate that a problem exists and to support your position. Look for facts that are relevant to your audience. For instance, state data would be important to a state legislator or a member of Congress from your state, while facility data would be used when talking to a nursing home official.

4. Share a story or give an example of the problem.

An example or story puts a human face on the issue and makes it real and more compelling. Again, make sure the example is relevant to your audience, such as an experience a constituent had in a legislator's district or a resident had in the administrator's nursing home).

5. Connect the issue to the audience's values, concerns, or self-interest.

Show your audience how this interest fits with what they care about, want or need. Learn what you can about the person. For example, is the legislator an opponent of "big government?" or a champion of social issues? Is the nursing home administrator concerned about the facility's reputation in the community or about competition with other nursing homes in the area?

6. Make your request (the "ask").

Clearly state what you want the person to do.

In addition:

- **Do as much research as you can about the person.**
Think about:
 - Personal experiences and feelings
 - Family
 - Public statements
 - History and track record (e.g. of the nursing home or of votes)
 - Advertising or campaign materials
 - Goals/aspirations
- **Anticipate arguments against your position and prepare responses to those arguments.**

EFFECTIVELY DELIVERING YOUR ADVOCACY MESSAGE

Arranging and preparing for the meeting

- **Set up a meeting time**

Scheduling an appointment better ensures that you will have the person's undivided attention. To make an appointment with a state legislator, call or email the legislator's legislative assistant; for a federal legislator, contact the legislator's scheduler. Make sure to state that you are a constituent. with the nursing home administrator call directly.
- **Review your message**

Have information about the person, your facts and your responses to counter-arguments in your mind.
- **Assign tasks for the meeting if you are going with a group:**
 - Determine who is going to say or do what and in what order. Tasks include:
 - Making introductions/thanking the person for meeting with you
 - Taking notes
 - Presenting the message:
 - The problem
 - The facts
 - The personal example/story
 - Making the request
 - Responding to questions
 - Responding to counter-arguments/resistance
 - Closing the meeting/thank you
- **Decide what information to bring**

Your audience does not have time to read through volumes of information. Leave a fact sheet that outlines and supports your position.

Conducting the meeting

- Be on time!!!
- Start with
 1. Introductions. Introduce yourself, identify who you represent or your role. The person assigned to this task should introduce themselves, the others and indicate the organizations that people represent or their role, such as family member.
 2. Identifying that you or others are constituent
 3. A compliment
- Present your message – remember to make “the ask”
- Take notes
- Ask whom to contact for follow-up
- Leave your card and information

Do

- Be courteous and polite
- Write a thank you note right away
- Provide information for unanswered questions
- Follow-up again if you haven't received a response

Don't

- Make up an answer or guess
- Argue or debate
- Alienate the person
- Take too much of the person's time

