



# American Society of Plant Biologists

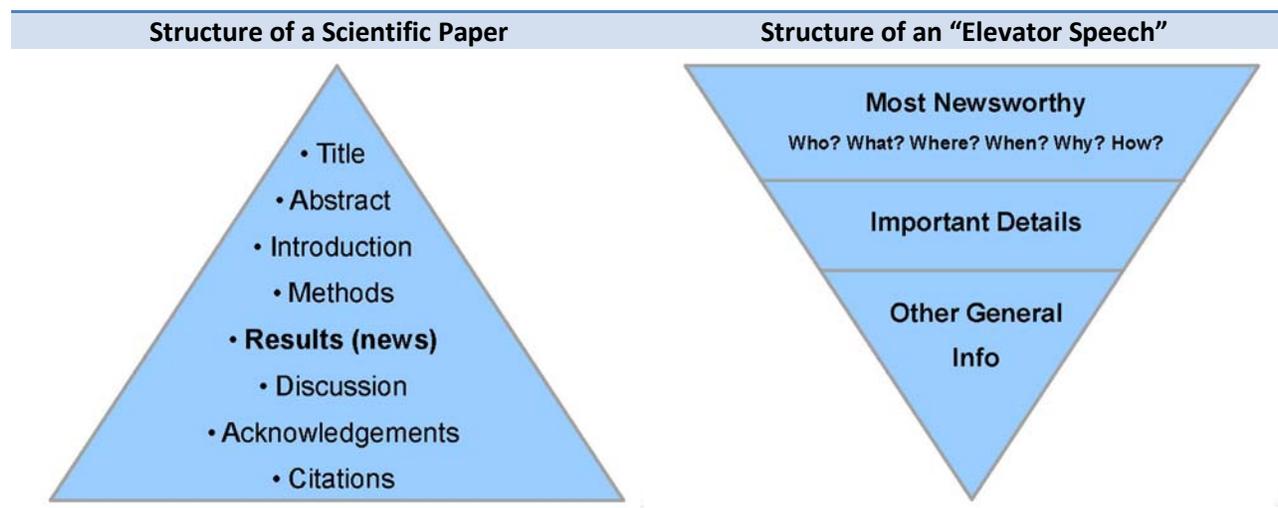
*Cultivating a better future through plant biology research*

## TALKING POINTS AND COMMUNICATION TIPS

Tailoring your message to fit your audience will improve your effectiveness in communicating science and delivering your message. Below are general communication tips as well as talking points for meeting with Members of Congress and their staff.

### GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS TIPS

- Know your audience and tailor your message accordingly.
- Create an “elevator speech” that you can expand upon for longer discussions.
  - Avoid using acronyms, jargon, or abbreviations.
  - Below is a diagram that represents the differences between how to structure a scientific paper and how to structure your “elevator speech” for effective communication.



- Discuss the broader impacts of your research; be sure to connect your research to the district/state if possible.
  - Ask yourself: “Why would my grandparents care?”
- Be sure to include your “ask” (that is, what you want). For example, you may want a Member of Congress to support a particular bill, support specific funding levels for various federal agencies, sign letters of support (often referred to as a “Dear Colleague” letter), etc.

## TALKING POINTS

### Introduce Yourself

- State your name, title, and affiliation.
- Mention that you are a member of ASPB as well.

### Talk About ASPB

- *“ASPB is an organization of some 4,500 professional plant biologists, educators, graduate students, and postdoctoral scientists. Our mission is to promote the growth and development of plant biology, to encourage and publish research in plant biology, to support plant biology education, and to promote the interests and growth of plant scientists, in general.”*
- *“Because of our membership’s extensive expertise and participation in the academic, industry, and government sectors, ASPB is able to look at issues from different perspectives and be a balanced resource.”*

### Set the Tone

- *“We understand the difficult fiscal environment our nation faces and that hard choices need to be made; however, it is also necessary to make strategic investments, such as in scientific research. Such investments help address national priorities, foster economic growth, and create jobs.”*
- *“For example, plant biology makes contributions to numerous different areas of national interests, such as food, fuel, environment, and health.”* (NOTE: Make it personal; tell them about your research; tell a story with a good outcome.)
- Discuss your own research, how it is funded, and any connections you can make between your research and positive impacts to your state/district.



Retrieved from  
<http://standupforamerica.wordpress.com/2009/08/25/defining-the-greater-good/facts-are-coming-cartoon/>.

### State Your “Ask”

- In meetings with science or appropriations staff, you should focus primarily on funding support for federal research agencies, specifically the National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Energy (DOE), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and National Institutes of Health (NIH). If a congressional office has a particular interest in a specific agency, then emphasize it. For example, *“Please support these agencies at the highest possible level. I receive funding from X agency and we are working toward solving Y problem.”*
- In meetings with agriculture staff, you should discuss the need to keep research as a top priority at USDA. For example, *“ASPB wants to protect research at USDA, but much more needs to be done and we do not want to lose the momentum.”*
- Be sure to thank the staff when you leave and follow-up with a thank you email.

Note: If the staff is particularly receptive or interested, stress the need for champions of scientific research in Congress, specifically for plant biology.

## “ASKS”

Stress the importance of sustained funding for NSF, USDA, DOE, and NIH.

### **National Science Foundation**

Sustain funding growth for NSF and ensure budget increases flow proportionally to the directorates. If appropriate, stress the transformational nature of the Plant Genome Research Program and how it has significantly impacted crops.

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Support funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) (authorized at \$700 million). Stress the importance of funding for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and mention the need to bolster ARS in order to better leverage and complement AFRI given the challenges in food and energy security.

### **Department of Energy**

Plant biology is an important component to solving future energy concerns. Thus, sustained funding growth for DOE’s Office of Science is critical to meeting America’s energy challenges. Specifically, emphasize the importance of sustaining biological research at the Office of Basic Energy Sciences (BES) and the Office of Biological and Environmental Research (BER) (not just climate research).

### **National Institutes of Health**

Sustain funding growth for NIH and advocate for increased support for plant biology research opportunities. Stress that, while we spend billions of dollars trying to treat disease, recent research clearly shows that diet and exercise are important factors in the prevention of disease. However, we spend relatively little addressing these issues. Plant biology is central to the production of healthy, beneficial food in abundance and, therefore, is a natural place for NIH’s further investment.

If you have further questions, please contact ASPB’s Public Affairs office at [PublicAffairs@aspb.org](mailto:PublicAffairs@aspb.org).