

## Hints and Tips for Inspiring the Future Volunteers

Standing in front of individuals or groups of young people can be daunting if you are not used to it. However, like many of our biggest fears of the unknown, the reality is rarely as bad we imagined it.

Here are some tips so that you, the school and the students get the most out of your visit.

### Before

- ❖ Respond to the teachers in a timely manner to assist with their planning. Do not ignore their message. If you are unable to attend, let them know!
- ❖ If possible, try to secure a 'backup volunteer' from work in the event that you've agreed but can no longer attend so as not to leave the school in the lurch.

When planning your talk/presentation:

**Do not try to do too much** – less is often more. With younger audiences it is particularly important to identify a couple of key messages and concentrate on conveying these in a variety of different ways as powerfully as you can.

**Ensure that your language is accessible** - introduce jargon and technical terms alongside other more accessible phrases or visual clues; chunk your explanations into smaller steps. Always consult the teacher before the visit about how much they may already know.

**Plan to be interactive** –This is the only way to truly engage your audience. Plan lots of questions; plan opportunities to bring student volunteers up to help you; even plan to get the audience to raise their hands to have collective votes on issues.

Be aware that **students are just as interested in you as a person** as they are in your job. Plan to share personal stories; explain why you are so passionate about your job; let your personality "leak out".

Check timings and rehearse.

### On the day

**Be understanding** – schools are very busy places can often seem chaotic. Be patient with teachers as you will be one of many people competing for their attention on the day. Adhere to timings and be aware that there could be things going on in the same room directly before and after your input.

- ❖ When presenting and/or answering questions, **be candid**, open, honest and frank (give your opinion too!).
- ❖ **Use visual aids and props from work.** Something as simple as a printed email can engage students as they are 'real-world' examples of work.

- ❖ **Avoid putting your audience on the spot**, teenagers in particular are self-conscious and many fear failure in front of a group. Rather ask open questions and get volunteers.
- ❖ **Avoid irrelevance and waffle** – leave room for interaction every 3-5 minutes
- ❖ **Make eye contact with your audience** and vary the tone, speed, pitch and volume of your voice as appropriate
- ❖ **Avoid any inappropriate language** or content.
- ❖ **Avoid trying to be cool** –this may seem obvious – just share your interests with students in a conversational and relaxed manner.
- ❖ **Communicate with enthusiasm and conviction** –It may seem unnatural to you, but it will read completely normally to the audience.
- ❖ **Do not show your fear** –Remember that the audience almost always wants you to succeed – your insecurities will just make them uncomfortable too. Adopt confident body language and slow your delivery down.
- ❖ **Monitor your audience carefully** and let their interests, reactions and questions shape your presentation/talk as it develops over time.
- ❖ Ensure that **you are never alone in a room** with the students. This is a legal requirement as our volunteers do not have to undertake statutory child protection checks.
- ❖ Remember a **teacher is there** to manage behaviour – you have nothing to fear!

#### **After**

- ❖ Seek feedback on your presentation/subject talk so you know how to improve
- ❖ Complete feedback for Inspiring the Future