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It Isn't Just What You Say about Science; It's Also How You Say It: Teaching Scientists to Talk to Policy Makers

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We have heard the calls for communication trainings for scientists, part of the recent push to encourage scientists to pare down their extensive explanations into jargon-free digestible bites. In this way, we are told, scientists can speak science to nonscientific policy makers and to the public at large.

But based on my research for my forthcoming book about evidence-based policy making in Congress, there is a key ingredient missing from this conversation. The challenge is not merely with the substance scientists communicate, but with the tone used to deliver that substance. Academics may be convinced of the importance of their research, but they often fail to communicate their confidence to the politicians who hold the purse strings. Indeed, [funding for academic research is crucial, and yet, federal funding for science is roughly \\$ 130 billion, compared to \\$ 450 billion flowing from the private sector](#). My research shows that the tentative tone of scientists proves a challenge in speaking with policy makers and demonstrates the need for science policy training programs to focus on tone rather than just substance.