

## The five hats of science communication

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The effectiveness of communication largely depends on the message that is being communicated. This can be shaped to some extent by the role or “hat” the communicator is wearing at the time.

Scientists and others conveying technical information need to consider what role they are playing in the communication process at any one time. Here are five possible roles:

1. The **informer** – provides expert advice based on scientifically proven facts or events, through fact sheets, media releases, presentations, etc
2. The **negotiator** – engages with others about a particular issue where a mutually acceptable outcome is desired
3. The **listener** – a highly under-utilised role where the key purpose is to listen and feedback information gained through listening for the purposes of clarity (important in consultation processes)
4. The **advocate** – takes a persuasive role to change other people’s attitudes or behaviour. When dealing with the media this is a very different role to the informer, and the messages will be different
5. The **facilitator** – the primary purpose of this role is to help others communicate to achieve shared outcomes

When designing communication messages, consider:

- Your role in a particular communication activity and what you want to achieve
- Your audience and what they want out of the communication process
- Anything your audience could misunderstand or get wrong in the communication process

It is important to make the role that you are playing clear throughout the communication process to avoid any confusion.

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