

Drawing a Common Vision

Science communicators often need to explain complex science topics to people that are not scientists. In our activity, Person A is the science expert and Person B is a non-expert. Person A must use effective communication skills to clearly explain a new topic (their drawing).

Differences in communication styles, vocabularies, and knowledge can limit successful learning. Science communicators can use these techniques when trying to teach another person something new:

- Start with big ideas, then describe finer details
- Explain things in an order that makes sense
- Use simple words the other person knows
- Compare things to familiar objects

Materials needed:

- An activity partner (friend or family member)
- Barrier (like a folder or book)
- 2 pieces of paper
- 2 pencils

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Sit facing your activity partner and set up a barrier between you.
2. Person A should draw a simple picture on a piece of paper, making sure Person B can't see it.
3. Person A must then describe to Person B how to draw the same picture, using only words—no gestures or drawings!
4. Person B can only draw based only on what Person A says—no questions!
5. Remove the barrier and see how well the two pictures match.

Additional exploration:

- Do you have LEGO® bricks? Try this activity again, but instead of drawing something, build a simple LEGO structure! Using only verbal directions, try to get your activity partner to build an exact replica of your structure.

Discussion questions:

- What techniques did person A use that were helpful in describing the picture?
- Did person A say anything that was confusing or misunderstood?
- What was the most frustrating part of the activity?
- How would you communicate differently next time?