

What is a science café, and how to organise it?


A science café is a debate between the audience and researchers, organised in a cosy atmosphere of a café or culture bar. The main objective of the event is to invite people to think about the exciting social and scientific issues in a non-academic environment. In addition, the science café is a good way to introduce the researchers and their research fields and the latest scientific developments to a wider and more diverse audience. The visitors of a science café are people from the street who are interested in science and the world around them. This form of events has no age limit; however, the statistics show that the more active visitors of science cafés are mostly students.

The choice of topic and speaker

These two go usually hand in hand, and you do not always get to choose the topic before an expert, or vice versa. In selecting the choice of topic, it is important for the theme to address people, be intriguing (received widespread media coverage, etc.), topical, raising questions and contradictions, and would affect a number of different interest groups. The topic does not have to be about one specific sphere of science. In selecting the speaker, it must be a certainty that the person is a real expert and specialist in his or her area. The speaker should be enthusiastic about the theme and show his or her willingness to discuss it. The speaker should be contacted quite early on (several months before the science café). The science cafés work best when the speaker is not giving a standard lecture with slides, since coziness and informal atmosphere are the basic cornerstones of science cafés. This issue should also be discussed with the performer in advance.

Timing

Choose the kind of day that could be considered 'popular' in the community. On Mondays, most people still feel unrefreshed from the activities on weekends, and Monday is the first working day of the week - thus, not the best choice. Sundays, on the other hand, are the days when people are getting ready for the new workweek - also not the best option. Be sure to review other events, something that would not coincide with the science café. The right start



time of the science café is also important. Here, again, it should be considered how the average person spends their time - when the working day ends, the times of the day the public transport is still running, etc. A good time to start with a science café is between 18:00 and 19:00.

Suitable location

In addition to researchers, you should also communicate with the cafés/bars. Choose a place that can hold at least 50 people (with extra chairs), is cosy, unique in atmosphere, and well known among the locals. When communicating with the cafés, it is also important to examine the existence of their technical equipment and to coordinate the possibilities with the needs of the speakers who will take the stage in that particular café (whether he or she is going to need a microphone, or would like to show something on the screen). Be sure to explain that the place should remain open, and not be available for booking. Hence, the science café would be open to all random people who find themselves there.

Moderator

The science café must have a moderator who would introduce the café to the audience, welcome the researcher and show the speaker the place where he or she would perform and make sure the speaker gets, for example, a glass of water, or other things he or she has requested. The moderator will also be responsible for instructing with the volunteers. During the science café, the moderator encourages the discussion between the audience and the speaker – asks questions if people are not doing it themselves, or asks a question from someone among the audience, etc. The duration of the science café depends highly on the audience and their interest in the topic. Mostly, it lasts for one and a half to two hours. The moderator is in charge of controlling the duration of the communication process and, thus, of the entire science café, keeping in mind the time limit.



Advertising and marketing

Advertising activities and the making/distributing of posters should be considered in good time. A poster should be ready at least three weeks before the science café (so that it can be distributed online), and printed posters should be put up in the city (in A3 format) a week and a half before the science café.