

# **22<sup>nd</sup> Science Picnic of Polish Radio and the Copernicus Science Centre**

**Catalogue of the best practices**



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## Introduction

- **Conditions and criteria:** Read the criteria used in evaluating applications and the information about the conditions of the Picnic (crowds, outdoor activities, changing weather conditions, durations, constraints on space, and so on).
- **Why and what for:** Ask yourself what you want to present at the Picnic, why you want to present this and what you can do to make your stand unique.
- **Theme:** Decide if you can link the form and content of your presentations to the theme and how you can achieve this goal. However, do not try to do this at any price. Interesting ideas that do not fit the theme can still secure a high rating, too.

## All stages: preparations and the day of the Picnic

- **Be credible:** Describe your passions. Remember that no one will see your presentations as interesting unless you yourself are convinced that they are. When presenting your own work, highlight the authentic emotions you yourself experience. In this way, you can develop a good rapport with the visitors and show them the "human" aspect of scientific research and your job.
- **Be comprehensible:** Remember to present your research in a way that is easy to understand for non-scientists. Remember that an adult layman is not a child. Do not trivialize your message, do not talk to adults in the same way you talk to children.
- **Be genuine:** Your daily research work will seem mysterious to most of those who visit the Picnic. Instead of preparing school-style experiments, bring an actual device you use on a daily basis, show materials and methods used to seek answers to research questions.
- **Be there to explain:** Do not turn your tent into a show of magic tricks. Science does not work that way. Every experiment you present should be accompanied by a comprehensible explanation of the mechanisms governing it.

## Planning stage: general comments

- **Do something new:** Try to avoid repeating the experiments and contents from the previous editions of the Picnic. Experiments or interesting aids can be a point of reference for what you want to talk about, which means your science-related work.
- **Target group:** When planning your activities, remember that you do not have to satisfy everyone. It is good to make a conscious choice of who your target group should be.



- **It is not about quantity:** It is better to prepare two or three well thought-out elements than many badly planned ones. It is a good idea to propose multiple occurrences of the most attractive activities. This increases the number of people that you can share your professional knowledge with.
- **Observers:** When choosing your shows or activities, make sure they are attractive even to observers (a lot of people can gather around your tent). The activities should be short. Many visitors want to see as many tents as possible, so they sometimes have difficulty deciding if it is worth spending a lot of time at a single stand, even if it is very interesting.
- **Emergency plan:** Make sure you have a plan B. A device might break down or supplies might run short. Then it is good to have extra resources as a backup.

### Planning stage: types of activities

- **Poster:** Do not make posters like the ones presented at research conferences. If you are using a poster, make sure it features as little text and as many graphics as possible. Place your poster close to the entrance to your tent so that it is visible to visitors passing by. Then it can serve as a stand-alone illustration or a preview of what is happening inside.
- **Multimedia presentation:** We strongly advise against such activities. In a well-lit tent, the images from an overhead projector will be barely visible and sound will be almost inaudible given the conditions at the Picnic (it is against the rules to use amplified sound for shows in the tent). Also, the organisers do not provide electronic equipment or screens.
- **Discussions and presentations:** If you choose this form, try to engage your audience, start a dialogue instead of launching into a monologue and encourage visitors to ask questions. If you can, present a small experiment, bring an interesting tool of work or a related artefact. The presentation should be as attractive as possible. Remember that the listeners have no place to sit and only the viewers situated in the front row will be able to see you and hear you well. Also, take into account the fact that this type of activity is tiring for you, especially as you must not use a microphone.
- **Workshops or activities of 15 minutes or more:** Despite being attractive in form, such interactions are rather long, which means queues. In addition, these are low-capacity activities, so not many people will be able to participate. When planning your workshops, make sure that their course and results are attractive also to observers. If you choose to organize workshops, consider additional shorter activities for those who will not take part in them.
- **Experiments conducted by visitors:** Such activities are very attractive and appealing to the public visiting the Picnic. When planning your stand, make sure that both the hosts and those taking part in the activities feel comfortable, you



have enough supplies and the arrangement of your tables and chairs is well planned.

- **Giveaways:** Think about how those who visit your tent might be able to take the results of their work or experiments home with them. These do not have to be expensive gadgets, even a printout of a measurement that can guest takes can be a nice souvenir and help the visitors remember your stand better. But remember that this idea may prove a huge challenge. The Picnic draws in thousands of visitors, so you if you are planning to offer giveaways, make sure you have a sufficient number (around 2,000-3,000).
- **Additional printed materials:** If you opt for additional printed materials such as instructions on how to do an experiment or organize a simplified workshop at home, take into account the number of visitors and demand for materials. Alternatives to paper include QR codes on the poster in your stand (after scanning a QR code with a mobile phone or a tablet, visitors are directed to a website where they can download additional instructions, proposed experiments and information about your institution).

### Performance stage: the day of the Picnic

- **Shift work:** Working in a picnic tent is tiring and no one can talk to an audience for nine hours without interruption, so there should be a number of people manning every tent. The best idea is to take shifts (based on our experience, we recommend no more than five hours). Make sure you have enough time to take a break and to eat and drink. Remember that leaving your tent unattended creates a bad impression, so plan breaks using a shift-based system.
- **Interaction:** The Picnic is not a place to deliver lectures but to interact with people. Be open and talk to people. Listen to those who visit your tent. You can learn something, too (for example how others see your work)!
- **Facilitate contact:** Visitors to the Picnic often look at the stands as shop windows (this especially holds true for adults). They are afraid to ask what this is about. Help them. Talk to people.
- **Get to know other participants:** Taking a walk around the Picnic to see what others are presenting is a must. You will have a unique opportunity to see good ideas, look for inspiration and talk to people – do not miss it!

**Remember that your role is crucial. You are the person making presentations, performing shows and doing experiments. Irrespective of the activities you propose, your willingness to interact with visitors, your passion for the kind of science that you want to talk about and your enthusiasm in sharing your knowledge are especially valuable.**

