

## Exhibit Tips

### Exhibits: What Makes Them Successful?

The idea of putting on a successful exhibit may seem daunting, but creating a fun and popular booth is a lot easier than you think! Below are some suggestions on how to get your group ready to brainstorm and create a successful and popular exhibit.



### What draws in a crowd?

The best exhibits immediately engage visitors with playful, open-ended discovery. The content fascinates people by helping them see themselves and the world in new ways, be it through the experience of unfamiliar things or a new perspective on the familiar. These exhibits then provide the opportunity for unscripted human interaction, creating a personal connection between the visitor and the people leading the exhibit.

### What keeps them there and engaged?

Here are a few factors to keep in mind when designing activities. While these aren't strict guidelines, we have found that the most well liked booths have these elements.

#### Hands-on activity:

- An easy yet demonstrative task that teaches people of all ages about a specific topic and allows them to be the scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and doctors!
- A large crowd is expected. Therefore, it's best to have an efficient activity that can handle about 3-5 participants (if not more) at a time.
- The activity should last about 5 minutes to keep traffic flow at a peak and ensure that a steady stream of visitors can move in and out throughout the day.
- Easily acquired, cost effective and plentiful materials will make sure to last the day.

- The level of content should appeal to both youth and adults. Remember, parents like to have fun too and are often left out of activities because exhibitors focus solely on younger participants. Consider offering your presenters suggestions on how to engage all age levels.



### Face to face interaction:

This is the public's chance to meet and interact with science and health professionals. Smiling volunteers with high energy and enthusiasm can be even more effective than any activity.

- A staff of 4-6 people (at minimum) makes your employees and volunteers more accessible to visitors. Exhibitors are expected to have their booth open for the entire duration of the event. It can be a long day, consider splitting the day into two to three shifts for your volunteers.
- Encourage volunteers to engage in conversation with visitors—asking questions that require visitors to think about or observe something. Let their responses and curiosity drive your interaction. We highly recommend training your volunteers and employees ahead of time in the activity you will be sharing with the public.

### What does your audience want?

Remember that one of the primary goals in a science festival is to make science relevant to everyone. When creating your exhibit you will want to step into the minds of your visitors and answer two questions:

#### 1. "Why do I care?"

This is your opportunity to show people that science is important and affects us all. Let your audience walk away knowing more about a topic and how it impacts them.

Tip: Select activities that relate to everyday life or familiar concepts. Use examples that a wide range of people will understand.

#### 2. "How can I learn more?"

Great events don't just excite people for a short duration. They inspire people to explore more on their own. Providing information about ways to continue their experience allows them to keep learning, so suggest avenues for further learning.

Tip: Be prepared to get lots of thoughtful questions from visitors-some that your volunteers may not know the answer to! Prepare volunteers to say "I don't know. That's a good question! How could we find out more?" and to suggest avenues for further learning.

### **What is possible?**

While we want our exhibitors to reach for the stars, with such a large scale event, there are some limitations. Discovery Days take months to plan and we are often bound by city laws and ordinances. We will have very detailed guidelines on what is and is not possible. If you have any questions, our festival staff is on hand to assist in any way we can.

Most importantly, science is fascinating and fun and this is your chance to let your work and your group shine!

**For activity ideas**, check out <https://www.howtosmile.org>.

**For more tips** on the do's and don'ts for creating a successful booth watch this great video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gEL1LRWdZE#t=17> from our friends at the Philadelphia Science Festival (carnival = Discovery Days).