

Workshops on communication and more

WORKSHOPS on scientific communication, teaching, and other topics nicely combine several benefits. Like our lectures, they are time- and cost-effective: they discuss the topic in some depth already in just half a day or in a full day. Unlike lectures, however, they are customized and interactive: through their use of participants' samples and rich group discussion, they focus on the specific needs and expectations of a group of typically 15 to 25 participants. They are popular on university campuses and at conferences.

For workshops, we must get a list of participants in advance (ideally, three weeks), together with their e-mail addresses. We contact them to request relevant samples, such as papers for a workshop on writing or slides for one on presentations. We then discuss a selection of these samples in the workshop, as a way to discover together what works and what does not. The resulting learning points are de facto relevant, consensual, and memorable—so much more than with generic examples.

Our reliance on participants' samples and group discussion ensures a self-setting workshop level (no time is lost on points already mastered) and constant opportunities for questions. It requires enough participants to have sufficient momentum in the discussion, yet few enough to give everyone a chance to participate. We typically work with 15 to 25 participants, although exceptions are possible if justified (to be discussed).

Our workshops can cover topics of scientific communication (oral presentations, written documents, graphical displays, as discussed in our 2009 book *Trees, maps, and theorems*), but also university teaching, statistical thinking, and others. The next few pages provide suggestions of topics, a short bio of the instructor, and answers to frequently asked questions.



The three pillars of our “effective communication for rational minds” approach (presentations, papers, and graphs) are always safe choices for workshops, but we can also cover specific topics more in depth or take transverse looks and reveal underlying ideas. We also love to help instructors make students learn.

Making the most of your presentation

Half a day / One day

Our most demanded topic on university campuses, *Making the most of your presentation* recommends a systematic approach to preparing and delivering effective oral presentations. Among others, it covers structure, slides, and delivery, as well as stage fright.

Structuring your research paper

Half a day / One day

Another classic, *Structuring your research paper* can be nicely captured by Hemingway’s statement that “prose is architecture, not interior decoration.” It explains how to structure a paper from the point of view of the readers, not the logic of the authors.

Conveying messages with graphs

Half a day

Conveying messages with graphs takes a good look at what is a frequently yet very often poorly used communication device in papers and presentations: graphs. It discusses how to choose the right graph, optimize its construction, and write a useful caption.

Effective slides

Half a day

A subset of our broader topic of oral presentations, *Effective slides* makes for a nice half-day workshop in which we look at many sample slides provided by participants. It covers how to design, construct, and use slides so as to convey messages optimally.

The three laws of communication

Half a day

Taking a transversal approach across presentations, papers, and graphs, our session on *The three laws of communication* looks at fundamental principles and ideas for getting the message across optimally. It illustrates these principles with varied examples.

Structured communication

Half a day / One day

In the same spirit as the session on the three laws, *Structured communication* covers how to organize a paper or a presentation in an effective, audience-friendly way, from the overall outline of the story down to the structure of a single paragraph or slide.

Teaching is not learning

Half a day / One day

Instructors and TAs often feel that they have done their job when they have “covered all the material!” But have students learned? *Teaching is not learning* shifts the focus to the learner’s activity. Of course, it strives to be a model of the approach it advocates.



An engineer from the Louvain School of Engineering and PhD in applied physics from Stanford University, Jean-luc Doumont now devotes his time and energy to training engineers, scientists, business people, and other rational minds in effective communication, pedagogy, statistical thinking, and related themes.

With his rational background, Jean-luc approaches communication in an original, engineering-like way that contrasts sharply with the tradition of the field, rooted in the humanities. He is thus well received by students and professionals in search of a method they can apply with the same rigor they have come to value in every other aspect of their occupations.

An articulate, entertaining, and thought-provoking speaker, Jean-luc successfully reaches a wide range of audiences around the world, in English, French, Dutch, and Spanish—as a trainer or invited speaker at an array of companies, top-ranked universities, research laboratories, and international conferences.

Jean-luc is the author of *Trees, maps, and theorems*, a critically acclaimed book on “effective communication for rational minds,” and of the Nature series *English communication for scientists* on nature.com.



Frequently
asked
questions

How much time should we foresee for your session?

Our workshops are run in half a day (3.5 or 4 hours, including break), as morning or afternoon sessions. For some topics, such as oral presentations, papers, or teaching, they can also be extended to a full day, then typically with a sandwich lunch for everyone. A full day allows us to go more in depth in the topic, cover more aspects of it, or look at more examples.

Do you allow audio/video recording of your session?

For copyright reasons, and also to avoid quenching the interaction, we do not allow recording devices such as cameras in the room. We thus recommend that all interested people attend our sessions “live.” Workshops are all about active participation anyway: watching a session on video will never be the same.

What are your room and audiovisual requirements?

Above all, the room for a workshop must be flexible: we must be able to rearrange the tables and chairs at any time, as a function of the learning activities. Generally, though, we remove all tables and work with chairs only—to be closer to the participants. For workshops, we always need something to write on, such as a white board (preferred) or flip-chart, and we often need a (bright, high-quality) projector and a screen or projection surface. For small groups (15–25 participants), we do not need a microphone.

Can attendees obtain a (signed) copy of your book?

We are happy to provide discounts for bulk orders as well as for individual orders within two weeks after the lecture. If you expect that many attendees will want their copy, the best is an advance order to allow a consolidated shipment to your location (thereby significantly reducing the shipping costs) and a book-signing session right after the lecture. We cannot ship signed copies of the book, however.