



General Advice



Institute *of* **Physics**

What's it all about?

This Pack contains detailed "How to do it" guidance designed to assist members of the Institute of Physics and others in developing events to mark Einstein Year (2005).

A major aim of the Year is to raise the profile of Physics with young people and those who influence them.

Running successful science events within the community is rewarding and exciting. It is also a good deal easier than you might imagine. All you need are some basic tools and skills, and these you will find in the material that follows.

Physics to Go is based on tried and tested ways of taking science to new audiences. These approaches do not assume that the audience is already interested in science. They involve ways of taking science out of the lab or office and into familiar locations and venues where public audiences naturally congregate, and where they feel comfortable. In particular, these approaches do not require the audience to attend events at unfamiliar or possibly imposing venues associated with science such as Universities or Research Institutes.

There are five main components of the Pack:

- General Advice - Introduction to running physics-related events for public audiences, including: "What's it all about?", "Tips and Skills", "Finding Funds" and "Suggestions for Follow-Up".
- Publicity Guide - How to maximise the publicity of your event, including: "Designing Posters and Advertising Material", "Tips for Preparing a Press Release", "Tips for Sending out your Press Release" and "Tips for Dealing with the Media", as well as a sample poster and press release.
- Evaluation Guide - Instructions on how to effectively evaluate your event, including: "Why Evaluate?", "What to Do", "Questionnaire Design", and sample evaluation questions.
- Generic Venues - Introduction to working in familiar public ("generic") venues. Details are included for three separate venues: pubs, supermarkets and motorway service stations. Sample quiz questions and activities associated with each of the venues are also included.
- Physics Tricks - a selection of 20 physics-related demonstrations that use simple everyday ingredients and are reliable, relatively inexpensive, require little preparation, and cover a range of venues, audience ages and sizes, and physical principles.

This Pack is not designed as a set of rules that must be followed – it is more a 'cookbook' of Physics related activities, full of tried and tested recipes for engaging public audiences. You are encouraged to adapt the enclosed instructions to reflect your own tastes and areas of expertise where appropriate.

Tips and Skills

Some general tips about how best to prepare for your event:

- Rehearse with a small friendly audience, such as selected non-science trained relatives. Don't just rehearse with your peers, since their understanding of the physics involved will be much greater than that of your target audience.
- Think about the questions you are likely to be asked. One of the most rewarding parts of these kinds of events is how they trigger questions and enquiries.
- Come over as being enthusiastic and accessible.
- Avoid using scientific language – especially jargon – where possible. Stick to words and phrases that are familiar to your audience, and clearly explain new terms if you do have to use them.
- Try to see things from the audience's point of view.
- Enjoy yourself!

Finding Funds

The events described within this Pack are all relatively cheap to organise. However, you may find it useful to obtain sponsorship or funding to cover the consumables and other minor costs involved. Suggested organisations to approach include:

- Marketing and publicity committees / departments within your organisation. They often have small funds available, or even resources that you can use e.g. design and printing facilities for posters and brochures.
- Einstein Year Grants Scheme – Funds are available directly from the IoP to support physics-based outreach activities during 2005. Priority will be given to activities that include the wider community and not just school pupils. There will be two rounds with closing dates of 24 September 2004 and 25 February 2005. Details of this scheme and many others are available at the Einstein Year website:
http://www.einsteinyear.org/get_involved/funding
- Specific Sponsors – Particular activities suggest appropriate sponsors, such as a local brewery for a series of Pub Science quizzes, or a supermarket chain for the supermarket competition. Don't simply think in terms of cash sponsorship; prizes and incentives may be much more useful to your event, e.g. free beers and a brewery tour for the winners in the case of the Pub Science quiz.

When asking for sponsorship or funding, it is important to carefully consider what the sponsor will get out of partnering your event. When you make your case to the sponsor, highlight key advantages, such as:

- Publicity (including photo opportunities for local media).
- Opportunity to distinguish their venue from other competing ones nearby.
- Emphasize that your event will be well run and enjoyable.

Suggestions for Follow-Up

Once your event is over, it may be tempting to forget all about it. Don't! It is very important to carefully review how the event was planned, organised and executed in order to improve such events for the future. The main steps involved in this review process are:

Hold a debriefing meeting

This should involve everyone who assisted in organising the event. The meeting does not need to be long – perhaps over lunch or coffee will suffice – but do make an effort to discuss the event within a week or so of its occurrence. This will allow you, as a group, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the event, and produce recommendations for future events. Whilst you may have experienced the event personally, you will be amazed at the advice and input that can result from a brief discussion between the other organisers.

Thank those people or organisations who helped out

This is especially important if your event relied on the support of volunteers and host venues. Recognising their input is the best way of ensuring their cooperation and involvement in future events. A simple email or letter outlining the successes of the event and thanking that person or organisation for their assistance will go a long way towards generating good will. If you are in a position of authority, a public recognition of thanks (for example to the departmental email list) will demonstrate support for these sorts of activities and encourage other people to become involved in the future.

Review the evaluation

There is no point doing evaluation if you don't take notice of the results. Pay particular attention to the attitudes of your audience to the event – it is the best way to find out how to effectively reach that same audience in the future.

Write a final report

(This may not be necessary for some funders and events). Most funders will provide an outline of the key information they require. However, make sure your report is as clear and as brief as possible in order to enhance dissemination. You should include the key outcomes of your event, and how they compare with the original aims. It is also important to be honest about any lessons learnt, and key recommendations for similar events in the future, so that your funders can encourage methods of best practice.

Disseminate your successes

If your event was successful then don't be shy to say so! Disseminating the success of your event will encourage other people to run future, similar events – and encourage funders to sponsor them! It will also allow other practitioners to learn from your experience. Dissemination methods could include advertising within your department or organisation, or further afield through media outlets. If you used an innovative method or venue or audience for your event, you could summarise your key findings in the form of papers or displays at relevant conferences, appearances at science festivals, or publications in journals.

Plan your next event

Don't waste the expertise that you have gained – plan your next physics-related event to occur soon!