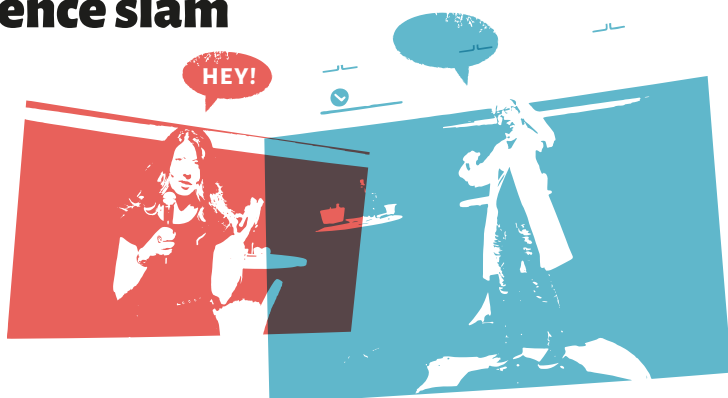


Science slam



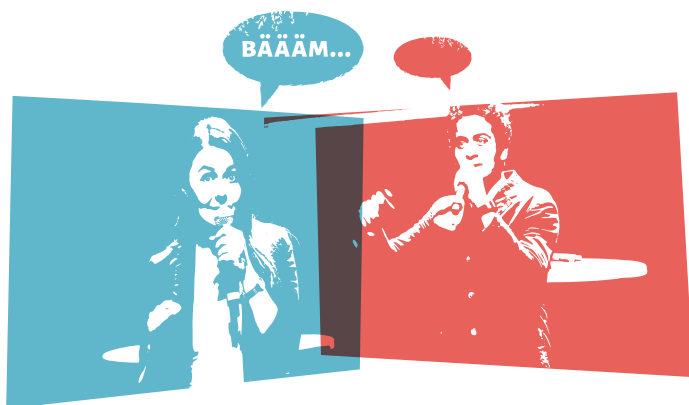
At a science slam, young scientists present their own research projects in entertaining and engaging talks and attract a diverse audience: young and older people, students, as well as non-academics, science nerds and slam fans. The idea comes from the poetry slam, an event that has been popular throughout the world since the 1980s. In a poetry slam, young writers take to the stage and read their own texts. Time is limited to five minutes, and the audience gets to vote on whose performance they liked the best. A science slam is similar: Typically, about six young scientists present their own research projects, the time is limited to ten minutes, and the audience gets to vote. That sounds easy...

But it can also go wrong: If you plan an afternoon event, you only recruit the slammers from your own institute, and you have a random member of staff moderate and serve still water in the institute's lecture hall, you will fail with this format.

The key to a great science slam is the choice of venue and moderator. The venue should ideally be a music club, a bar or a theatre. The moderator should engage the audience, create a good atmosphere and ask for lots of applause for the slammers, without talking too much or trying to take centre stage. To get the audience to actively engage with the topics, the scoring system should encourage discussion: Sets of voting cards are distributed to the audience, and after each presentation, the moderator asks the card holders to talk to their seat mates for a couple of minutes about how many

points they would like to award to that particular talk. The fact that the audience (not a panel of experts!) forms the jury ensures active engagement of the audience with science and creates an interactive, lively atmosphere. At the same time, it encourages the slammers to present their research in a way that is understandable and entertaining to a general audience – because even if there are a lot of young academics in the room, a biologist might have trouble understanding the research of a legal scholar.

Furthermore, the moderator should also make it clear to the slammers that the voting system is there to engage the audience, that it can never be completely fair, and that it says nothing about the quality of their research and certainly nothing about them as a person. The atmosphere among the slammers should NOT be competitive. Prizes should be kept simple (books, chocolate, cups, etc.). And remember: A preparatory workshop in which the slammers get creative together and help each other to get the best out of the performances helps a lot with team building. In a science slam, everything is allowed: props, presentations, experiments. It is not one of those formats that tries to make the performance as difficult as possible for the scientists instead of looking for what's best for the audience.



Recommended reads:

- ♦ Niemann et al. (2020), *Science Slams as Edutainment: A Reception Study*. Media and Communication 8:177–190. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i1.2459>
- ♦ Hill M.B. (2022), *The New Art of Old Public Science Communication - The Science Slam*. Routledge. ISBN 9781032000794