

IDS 2935: Final project

Communicating about Rain Forests & Their Conservation

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Conservation organizations, museums, zoos, governments, and universities regularly undertake marketing initiatives to promote their conservation objectives, increase public awareness and concern for biodiversity, and encourage their audiences to adopt sustainable practices and lifestyles. These campaigns often rely on visual, audio, or social media to clarify and communicate their message, but *they are unlikely to be successful unless they have a narrow target audience, compelling campaign materials designed specifically for this audience, and they include a call to action.* **Your assignment is to develop materials for a campaign that communicates to UF undergraduates (1) the importance of rain forests in their daily lives, and (2) concrete steps they can take to promote rain forest conservation.**

- **Value:** 200 Points
- **Due:** 14 December 2023
- **Submission:** Via Canvas

The Complete Assignment requires submission of the following three sections:

1. Part 1: A complete 'Message Box' with audience-specific responses to the guiding questions (40 pts)
2. Part 2: A *Message Communication Tool* designed specifically for your target audience (120 pts)
3. Part 3: A brief *reflection* on the process and product (40 pts)

PART 1: The Message Box

There are many ways to effectively organize the scientific information we want to communicate to non-scientists. One of these is the 'Message Box' (Figure 1), which was developed by the organization [COMPASS](#) to help sort and distill information about a topic in a way that resonates *with your target audience*. The Message Box is often used by scientists talking about their own research when communicating with decision makers; you will be using it to map out how to communicate about complex issues related to rain forests and their conservation to your target audience.

1. Review the [Message Box Workbook](#); it includes blank templates you can use to construct your message box prior to the interview.
2. Fill out the 5 sections of the Message Box; note that the Sections 1-3 are already addressed by the assignment prompt
 - **Audience:** Undergraduate students at UF
 - **Issue:** Identify and describe the overarching issue or topic that you are addressing. This should be in very broad terms - the big picture - and formulated as a short, concise, and clear phrase. For this assignment it is "Conserving Tropical Rain Forests"***
 - **Problems?** What are the specific topic(s) or conservation issue(s) that you are addressing? This can be 1-3 more detailed statements. For example, for this assignment

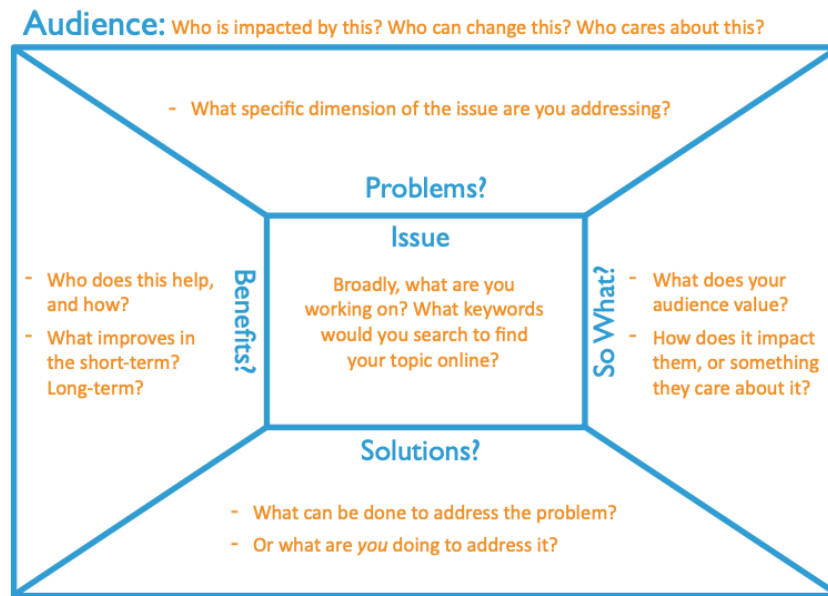


Figure 1: The COMPASS Message Box.

the Problem(s) could be “1. College students are often unaware of how important rain forests are to their daily lives”, and “2. College students have limited knowledge of immediate or simple actions they can take to promote rain forest conservation”

- **So What?** Why should your audience care about the issue? (2-4 reasons)
- **Solutions?** Outline the options for solving the problem or addressing the consequences of the issue you are discussing. Can your audience do anything to help? Remind yourself of why you are communicating this issue/problem to this audience.
- **Benefits?** What good things will result from implementing the solution(s)? While it is important to address ‘Global’ benefits, *be sure to emphasize the local and direct benefits to your specific audience in ways that will resonate to them.*

PART 2: Communicating your message

The Message Box was originally developed as a tool for scientists that were going to be meeting with policy makers or being interviewed by the news media, and it has proven to be a very effective means of identifying and simplifying the information one is seeking to convey. **The next step is to communicate that message in a way that is relevant to your audience by creating materials to communicate your message.** To do so choose one of the three categories of materials below, but remember: **no matter which category you choose, your campaign materials *must* include a call to action and concrete steps students can take** to promote rain forest conservation.

1. **Option 1:** Prepare platform-specific social media materials that communicate the information in your Message Box. A [recent survey](#) found that very few university students (< 20%) actively seek out news from traditional news sources such as CNN or the New York Times. Instead, most university students (~60%) said they got their news by bumping into it on social media platforms. This is part of a broader trend in the US, in which [U.S. adults](#)

under 30 now trust information from social media almost as much as from national news outlets. So release your inner-influencer! For example you could:

- Record TikTok videos (30-60 seconds) in different styles (explainer, street interview, day-in-the-life of a rain forest animal, whatever)¹.
- Record a series of Instagram Stories or animated YouTube video.

You are not required to post your videos, nor do you have to appear in them (though you may if you wish to). Regardless of your communication format, be sure to use photos, music, or video that are in the public domain or that have been licensed under the creative commons. ([Unsplash](#) is a great source of photos you can use for free with no attribution required).

¹ If you choose this option, you might find this [post on TikTok trends](#) useful... though let's be honest, how cool can something be if there is an article telling you how cool it is? There are also free [templates](#) you can use to help you prepare your videos.

2. **Option 2: Make a Poster:** Alternatively, you could prepare an poster for to explain to your focal audience the issue in your Message Box.

A visually captivating poster can be a great way to communicate information. You should make a poster than can be printed 11' x 17', but other than that the content and design is up to you - for instance it could be an infographic poster (see below), or you could make it in the style of a poster for a movie or concert. Just remember your target audience - would it capture *your* attention? Would *you* hang it on the wall of your apartment? - and that it must include a call to action and concrete steps.

Posters: Some inspirational examples of conservation campaign posters can be found here:

- <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/107312403594437707/>
- <https://za.pinterest.com/jax1703/conservation-campaigns/>
- <https://www.printrunner.com/blog/earth-day-poster-ideas/>

Infographics: Many campaigns use an infographic poster to convey their message. What is an Infographic? It is a “visual representation of information or data”. Put another way, it is an easy-to-understand overview of a topic using a collection of images, data visualizations (e.g., bar graphs, symbols of different sizes), and minimal text. Infographics make information easy to understand and are visually appealing. I really like the one on how prevalent palm oil is in our daily lives (Figure 2).

To get started, here is an overview on [Different Types of infographics and how to make them](#) (see also Figure 3). This site includes links to sites where you can make them for free with templates, but the easiest thing might be to make it with PowerPoint. [This short video](#) will walk you through how to find and import graphics into PowerPoint; step-by-step directions on making an infographic in powerpoint can be found [here](#). Just remember: an infographic should be *focused* (one single message; emphasize its significance to you), *graphic* (graphics and images tell the story, fewer than 800 words), and *ordered* (the sequence should be obvious; simple flow paths and cues should guide the reader).

IMPORTANT NOTE: There are *lots* of templates online for both infographics and environmental campaign posters. However, these tend to be very generic - remember that your poster must be relevant to UF students. ***I'd rather see something less polished but relevant than a generic poster / infographic that doesn't engage or is irrelevant your audience.***

3. Option 3: Propose your own 'Communication Materials'

Don't like either of the options above? No problem! Propose a different way to creatively communicate about rain forests and their conservation to your fellow UF students. Below are some possibilities I came up with after a morning consuming far too much RFA-certified coffee and chocolate; you're welcome to tackle one of them or propose something else. ***If you do want to propose your own project, you need to discuss it with me first so we can define the expectations and a grading rubric. The deadline to do that is November 27nd, 2023.***

- **Music:** Write a song about your topic and record yourself (or a friend) performing it. Or maybe rewrite the lyrics of [these cheesy 1980's love songs](#) to be about rain forests and record those. Perform a concert for friends of a piece you composed.
- **Art:** create artwork (any medium: digital, ceramics, painting, woodcuts, comics, stickers)
- **Website:** Make an website that presents information about rainforests in a creative way. We saw examples of powerful online data visualizations in the newspaper articles we read. Here is another way to do that: a [map showing the flow of resources](#) from the tropics to UF
- **Podcast:** What you do is up to you. For example, you could record the first episode of a podcast series in which you interview rain forest plants or animals (inspired by [Everything is Alive](#)). Or maybe it's a true-crime podcast. Or movie reviews. Whatever you want.
- **Buzzfeed-style list:** Compile a list of Rain Forest Fails in Advertising, Marketing, or Popular Culture (with explanations of why they are incorrect).
- **Event:** organize an event for your rommates, sorority, fraternity, club, or team (trivia night, climate change scenario simulation with en-ROADS, fundraiser, movie night).
- **Stream:** Do you game? Maybe stream you playing video games about rain forests where you critique the way they present the material: [try the free demo of Empires of the Undergrowth](#), If you want to play [Green Hell](#) I have a code for you to download it for free).
- **Memes:** Create memes to highlight your selected issues, with an emphasis on awareness of the local relevance of rain forests and actions students can take to advance their conservation.
- **Anything else:** No idea is too weird.

PART 3 (40 points): Reflection

Once you have completed the project, take time to reflect critically on the following and ***summarize your reflection in a 400-500 words essay.***

1. What you learned from this project about the challenge of communicating about tropical

- rain forests to audiences that may not know much about them;
2. Any new skills, knowledge, or information you gained this semester (both things we covered in class and any you learned through your own activities and experiences);
 3. What actions you might take going forward that will advance rain forest conservation

Rubrics:

Part 1: Message Box (40 pts)

Criteria	Emerging (0-12 pts)	Proficient (13-26 pts)	Mastery (27-40 pts)
Issue	The Big Picture Issue is of minimal importance	The Big Picture Issue is Important but not clearly articulated	The Big Picture Issue is Important and clearly articulated
Problem and Relevance (So What?)	The specific problem is of minimal importance (globally, locally) and the relevance to the selected audience is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance but local relevance is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance and the local relevance is clearly articulated
Solution and Benefit	The solutions and/or benefits are poorly articulated	The solutions and/or benefits are stated for a general audience but not targeted to the specific audience.	The potential solutions and significance/benefit are clearly and concisely identified in a way that is relevant to the target audience.
Language and Writing	The writing is grammatically incorrect or hard to read.	The language is correct but full of jargon that is difficult for the audience to read.	The writing is clear, geared to the appropriate audience, and concise.
Overall	The Message Box was not well-gearred to the audience or the content was limited.	The contents of the Message Box were generally accurate but not compelling for the focal audience.	A specific audience was chosen, and the 5 components of the Message Box were geared to that audience. The information provided was accurate and clearly stated.

Part 2: Communication Tool (120 pts)

Option 1

Criteria	Emerging (1-40 pt)	Proficient (41-80 pts)	Mastery (81-120 pts)
Issue	The Big Picture Issue is of minimal importance	The Big Picture Issue is Important but not clearly articulated	The Big Picture Issue is Important and clearly articulated
Problem and Relevance (So What?)	The specific problem is of minimal importance (globally, locally) and the relevance to the selected audience is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance but local relevance is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance and the local relevance is clearly articulated
Solution and Benefit	The solutions and/or benefits are poorly articulated	The solutions and/or benefits are stated for a general audience but not targeted to the specific audience.	The potential solutions and significance/benefit are clearly and concisely identified in a way that is relevant to the target audience.
Language and Writing	The writing is grammatically incorrect or hard to read.	The language is correct but full of jargon that is difficult for the audience to read.	The writing is clear, geared to the appropriate audience, and concise.
Overall	The Message Box was not well-geared to the audience or the content was limited.	The contents of the Message Box were generally accurate but not compelling for the focal audience.	A specific audience was chosen, and the 5 components of the Message Box were geared to that audience. The information provided was accurate and clearly stated.
social media materials	minimal effort and creativity,. Don't take advantage of the platform	platform specific content that with some additional effort could engage or even captivate audiences	content is creative, engaging, and likely to attract attention to the issues discussed.

Option 2

Criteria	Emerging (1-40 pt)	Proficient (41-80 pts)	Mastery (81-120 pts)
Issue	The Big Picture Issue is of minimal importance	The Big Picture Issue is Important but not clearly articulated	The Big Picture Issue is Important and clearly articulated
Problem and Relevance (So What?)	The specific problem is of minimal importance (globally, locally) and the relevance to the selected audience is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance but local relevance is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance and the local relevance is clearly articulated
Solution and Benefit	The solutions and/or benefits are poorly articulated	The solutions and/or benefits are stated for a general audience but not targeted to the specific audience.	The potential solutions and significance/benefit are clearly and concisely identified in a way that is relevant to the target audience.
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Overall	The Message Box was not well-gearred to the audience or the content was limited.	The contents of the Message Box were generally accurate but not compelling for the focal audience.	A specific audience was chosen, and the 5 components of the Message Box were geared to that audience. The information provided was accurate and clearly stated.
infographics	Topic and/or main ideas are absent or very unclear; Very little detail is provided for the main ideas and understanding is limited; Fewer than 2 accurate facts are displayed; Graphics do not relate to the topic; Color, shape, size, and arrangement are distracting or misleading; Is distractingly messy, unattractive, or very poorly designed.	Topic and main ideas are clear; Detail is added to support each main idea with minimal clutter. 3 accurate facts are displayed; Most graphics represent the information appropriately; Color, shape, size, and arrangement are eye catching and contribute some meaning; Is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness.	The topic and messages of the infographic are clear and easily understood; Intended to inform or convince the viewer; Details (including labels) support the main idea without distracting with clutter; At least 4 accurate facts/concepts are displayed in the infographic; The graphics used represent information appropriately; Color, shape, size, and arrangement of graphics contribute meaning to the overall message; The design/layout is neat, clear, and visually appealing.

Part 3: Reflection (40 pts)

Criteria	Habitual Action/ Non-Reflection (1-10)	Understanding (11-20)	Reflection (21-30)	Critical Reflection (31-40)
Reflection on Existing Knowledge C	Automatic/superficial responses with little conscious/deliberate thought or reference to existing knowledge; responses are offered without attempting to understand them	Makes use of existing knowledge without an attempt to evaluate/appraise knowledge; demonstrates understanding but does not relate to other experiences or personal reaction	Active and careful consideration of existing knowledge and articulates new understanding of knowledge as a result of experience	Critically reviews existing knowledge, questions assumptions, and articulates new perspectives as a result of experience
Connection to Academic Concepts	Connections are not drawn between experience and class content (concepts/theories) or literature	Connects experience with class content (concepts/theories) but remains superficial or abstract	Demonstrates clear connections between experience and class content (concepts/theories) ; evidence of application of theory	Demonstrates superior connection between experience and class content (concepts/theories) and literature; evidence of application of theory and reconstruction of perspective
Evidence of Development	No evidence of insights about self or particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience	Limited/superficial insight about self or particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience	Articulates new understanding/insights about self or particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience	Articulates transformation of their perspective of themselves or about a particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience

Sample Infographics

A Day in Your Life with Palm Oil

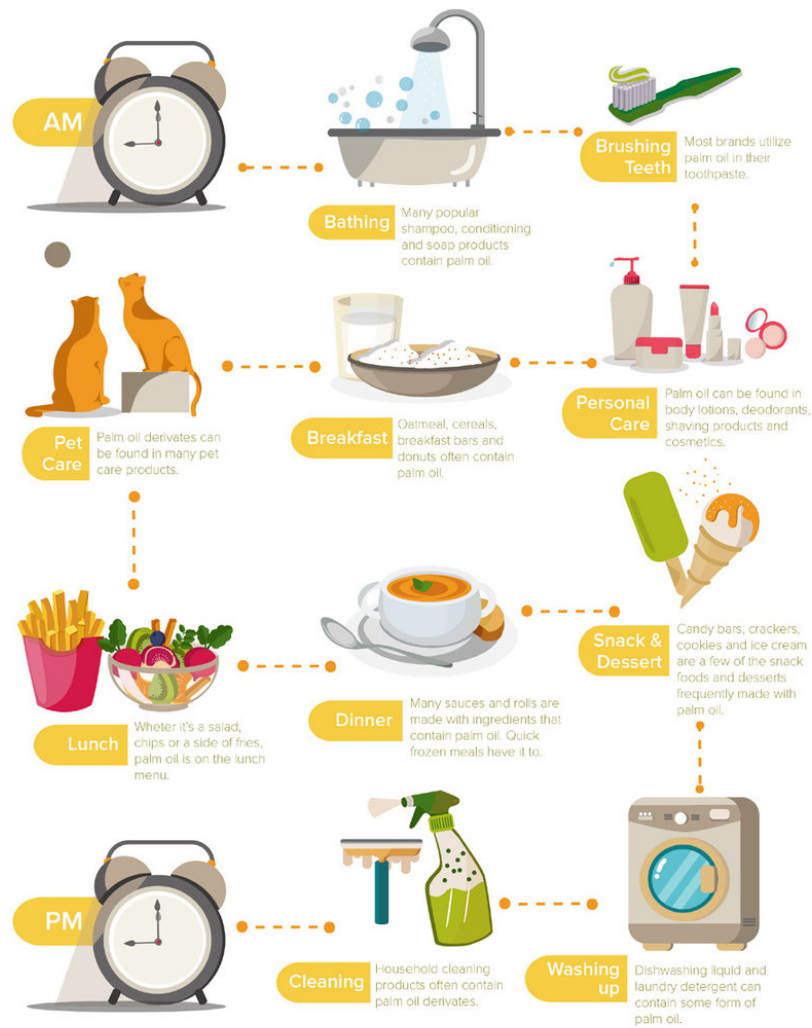


Figure 2: A Day in Your Life - Palm Oil (based on design by Philadelphia Zoo)

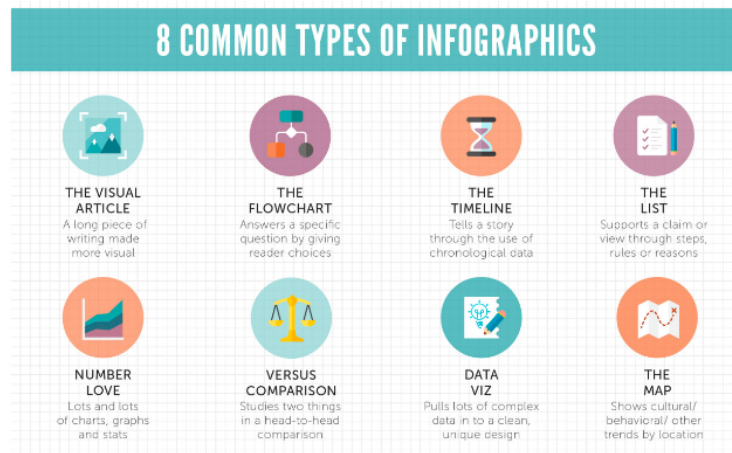


Figure 3: Different Categories of Infographics