

So you've agreed to talk with students. Now what?

Even CEOs can get nervous talking to a roomful of teenagers.

*Here are some **speaker tips** for connecting with high school students.*

Be yourself.

Students appreciate adults who will talk to them like adults. Don't worry about impressing them. Just be real.

Describe your job.

Don't assume that students know what an architect, engineer, radiologist or carpenter does. Explain your responsibilities and projects. Highlight the best and worst parts. Be colorful.

Share your own education and career path.

Students often think they will choose a job and then do that job forever, which is both unlikely and unnecessarily anxiety-provoking. Many people start in one field and then switch. Describing your path, and any twists and turns along the way, is likely to be both interesting and reassuring to students.

Explain what it REALLY takes to succeed at work.

Do talk about the specific skills you need for your job. But also talk about the more universal skills needed to be successful in your workplace, such as teamwork, showing up on time, good communication, creative problem-solving, ethics, etc.

Talk to the whole room.

You might notice several students who are particularly attentive and some in the back who appear disengaged. Don't be unnerved. Just keep looking for opportunities to connect. Students are almost always listening, even if they aren't making eye contact with you.

Be concise.

It's always better to talk for 5-10 minutes and then leave plenty of time for questions than to spend the whole time talking "at" students. Just save some material and anecdotes in reserve.

Expect the expected -- and while you're at it, have fun!

Students will probably ask how much you make. (You can always give general salary ranges.) Students might take a few minutes to warm up. (It's OK.) Just remember: Our experience at PWA tells us that students are hungry for career advice and pleased to have adults pay attention to them, tell them about opportunities and share some illuminating, informative anecdotes about the "real world."

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