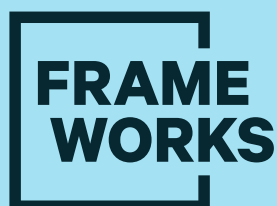
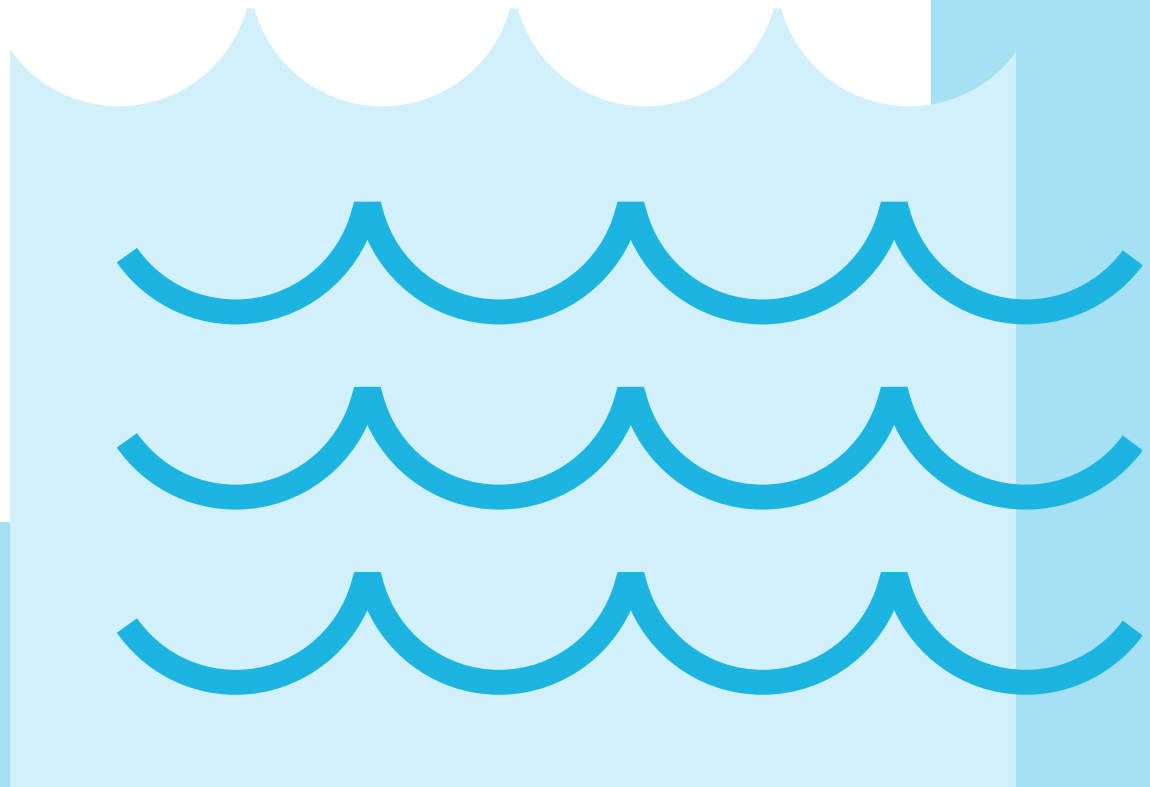


# How to Talk About the Ocean so that People Will Listen

## A Quick Guide

May 2020

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In partnership with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
[www.gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch](http://www.gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch)

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## A Quick Guide

**This toolkit is for anyone who talks about:**

- **the ocean**
- **climate change**
- **nature**

**to different audiences including the public, politicians, policymakers and businesses.**

**It is based on comprehensive **research**\* with the UK public.**

\* [www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/uk\\_oceans/uk\\_oceans\\_turning\\_the\\_tide.pdf](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/uk_oceans/uk_oceans_turning_the_tide.pdf)

# Contents

<b>Introduction: What's This All About?</b>	_____	<b>4</b>
<b>Things to Think About</b>	_____	<b>5</b>
<b>Three Ways to Talk About the Ocean</b>	_____	<b>6</b>

# Introduction: What's This All About?

When communicating about the ocean, we all make choices about what we say and how we say it.

We can make choices that increase public understanding and boost support for action to heal the ocean. We can avoid messages that get lost in translation.

By framing our communications well we can be confident that we're being heard and understood.

These tried-and-tested ways of talking about the ocean are based on [extensive research](#).\*

## **What Is Framing?**

Framing means making choices about what to say and how to say it. The language we use and ideas we conjure up have important consequences.

By applying the insights from framing research, we can be confident that our choices will have the intended effects.

\* [www.frameworksinstitute.org/valuing-the-ocean.html](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/valuing-the-ocean.html)

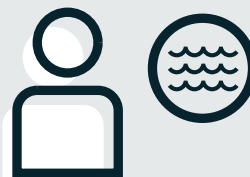
# Things to Think About

- Who are you targeting with your ocean communications?
- How have you framed the ocean in recent communications?
- Are you using tried-and-tested messages?

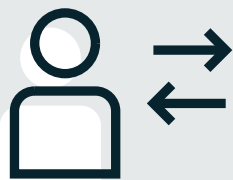
## How the public tends to think about the ocean



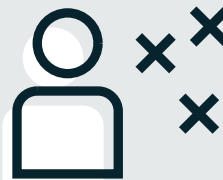
**Unaware of the extent of the problem**



**See the ocean as a vast other world that is powerfully self sustaining**



**Struggle to connect human actions with lasting damage**



**When they think about problems, they become fatalistic about ever solving them**

## Dive Into the Research

These recommendations are based on mixed-method research with over 8,000 members of the UK public. To explore these findings in depth, visit [www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/uk\\_oceans/uk\\_oceans\\_turning\\_the\\_tide.pdf](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/uk_oceans/uk_oceans_turning_the_tide.pdf).

# Three Ways to Talk About the Ocean

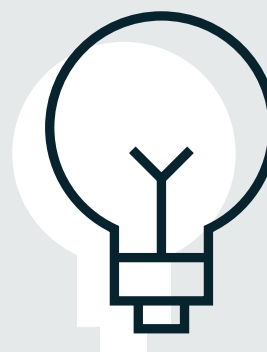
**1. Talk about the health of the ocean**



**2. Explain how the ocean's health has been harmed over time, harming our own health**



**3. Turn to the future and be clear that we can and should make things better**



# 1. Talk about the health of the ocean.

We have an intuitive understanding that health changes and can be improved. By talking about the ocean's health we quickly and concisely convey the reality of the situation – and the fact that change is possible. Therefore words that are associated with health can help strengthen your communications about the ocean. For instance:

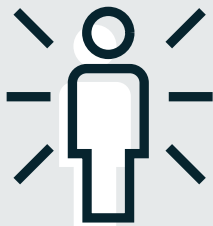
Damage	Repair	Solutions
Wounding	Healing	Treatment
Infecting	Reviving	Diagnosis
Hurting	Treating	Prognosis
Injuring	Curing	
Inflicting	Resuscitate	
Symptoms	Rejuvenate	
Conditions		

## Power of Metaphors

Metaphors act as shortcuts, helping people understand a new idea by explaining it using a concept they already understand.

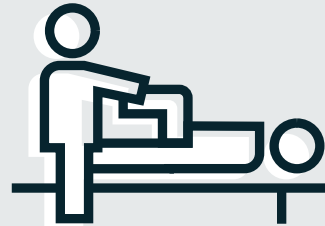
### Extend the health metaphor to:

**Liken the planet to a body to explain how the ocean, planet and people are connected**



Just as parts of the body are interconnected and dependent on one another, the ocean plays a vital role in regulating the health of our planet.

**Explain marine protected areas by comparing them to physiotherapy for the ocean**



Marine protected areas take care of ocean health by allowing the ocean to heal, just as physiotherapy helps injuries heal.

## 2. Explain how the ocean's health has been harmed over time, harming our own health.

We need to move thinking away from the idea of the ocean as a vast self-sustaining 'other world'.

To do this we can:

- Show that the ocean's health has worsened as a result of human activity
- Make it clear that the ocean matters for human health.

It's not enough to state that a big problem exists. We see daily messages about multiple crises, leading to disbelief and fatalism.

Instead, we need to explain the problem by being specific about the causes and implications. This boosts support for potential solutions. For example:

**The health our ocean enjoyed in the past is crumbling. Fossil fuels and overfishing are inflicting serious injury. And these harms are having knock-on effects for the whole planet and our own health. The right policies and interventions are vital to heal the ocean – and keep us all healthy.**

### **Explaining, Not Asserting**

Explaining, instead of stating or asserting, invites people in to better understand an issue – and see the solutions to problems. When people don't understand, they often default to the idea that 'things just are the way they are' assume that 'there's nothing we can do about this'.



### 3. Turn to the future and be clear that we can and should make things better.

#### Showing Why This Matters

Values remind people why they should care about an issue. They work because they connect with beliefs we all share. Unlike facts or scientific arguments, they are difficult to argue against.

Inspire people by talking about the future and by connecting with shared values. Convey our shared duty to keep the ocean healthy for future generations. Talk about improvement, positive change, and a future state of wellbeing. For example:

**We have a responsibility to take care of our ocean and keep it healthy for future generations. The actions we take today can revive the ocean's health for the future. We all want to pass on our world in good condition to those who follow us. There is overwhelming scientific evidence that healing our ocean can help stabilise the climate and help secure our future.**

Invoking shared values in this way:

- Taps into a widely shared belief that we need to care for the planet
- Activates a sense of responsibility
- Decreases fatalism
- Reinforces that our actions make a difference.

#### Beware of 'Fairness'

When talking about stewardship, avoid describing it as a matter of fairness to the next generation. This idea actually decreased people's concern for the ocean.

### Checklist 1. Do's and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Explain problems by talking about them in terms of the ocean's health	Simply highlight that there are problems
Show that there are workable solutions	Talk about the crisis in our ocean without showing that it can be addressed
Connect your message to the health of the ocean and the implications for our health	Expect a purely factual and scientific message to cut it
Use words like 'we', 'us' and 'our' to foster a sense of collective responsibility	Run the risk of sounding more 'finger waggy'
Talk about change over time – how things have got worse due to human action but can be healed too	Talk about resilience – this gives the impression that the ocean is self-healing
Convey our shared duty to keep the ocean healthy for future generations	Pit the economy against the environment
Be creative to bring these ideas to life in different ways for different audiences	Use alternative metaphors and values based on the idea of 'fairness'

### Checklist 2. Message Map

1. Talk about the health of the ocean
  - Establish that the ocean has health. Where relevant, bring in:
    - The body metaphor
    - Marine protected areas as physiotherapy
2. Explain how the ocean's health has decreased over time
  - Establish that this is a result of human activity
  - Be specific about causes and consequences
  - Make sure you're explaining how and why – not just asserting the scale of the problem
3. Show how a better future is possible
  - Evoke the value of 'stewardship' – taking care of the ocean for future generations
  - Describe the specific measures we can take to improve the health of the ocean

### Get Involved or Ask for Help

If you're using these frames or exploring how to, get in touch: [info@gulbenkian.org.uk](mailto:info@gulbenkian.org.uk).

## About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a non-profit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organisation's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis®, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts and publishes multi-method, multi-disciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks®, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organisations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Learn more at [www.frameworksinstitute.org](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org)

## About the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch)

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is an international charitable foundation based in Portugal, with offices in London and Paris. It acts in the fields of arts, social welfare, education and science. Based in London, the UK Branch is focused on building coalitions to tackle complex global problems. It looks ahead, thinking globally and acting locally, to create the conditions for change by connecting across borders of all kinds – national, cultural, organisational, disciplinary and social. The UK Branch prioritises the vulnerable and underserved in the UK and elsewhere.

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