

Planning and Running a *Cosmic Cafe*

The Basics: Who

Who do you need?



An **organizer** who will lead the planning

A **moderator** who will lead cafe discussion
(These can be the same person)



A **speaker**.

Find them at universities, government research institutions, professional associations, museums, engineering firms and local publications.

The Basics: How



Choose a Topic

Get inspired by NOVA's The Fabric of the Cosmos series. Themes include Time, Space, Quantum, and Multiverse.



Find a Casual Venue

Science cafés have been held in pubs, coffeehouses, bookstores, restaurants, art galleries, malls, and even bowling alleys and pizza parlors—be creative!



Promote Your Cafe

Put your Cosmic Cafe on the national map and find a customizable press release, flier and social media and marketing tips in the...

The Resources



Cosmic Cafe Outreach Toolkit sciencecafes.org/cosmic_cafes

Includes:

- Episode Descriptions
- Tips for talking about Time, Space, Quantum, and Multiverse topics
- Customizable press release
- Video Clips from *The Fabric of the Cosmos*
- TV press releases
- Preparation Checklist
- Cafe sign-in sheet

Speaker and Topic



- **Approach 1:** Identify a speaker and work with them to select a topic related to *Fabric* that connects with their expertise
 - Find speakers at universities, government agencies, museums, professional organizations, businesses, etc.
 - Qualities to look for:
 - personable, friendly, enthusiastic
 - broadly knowledgeable about the topic
 - comfortable answering questions
 - able to discuss research and concepts without using jargon

Speaker and Topic



- **Approach 2:** Select a topic and find an appropriate speaker
 - *Fabric* themes include: Time, Space, Quantum Mechanics, and Multiverse.
 - Some topic ideas:
 - Is Time travel possible?
 - Visualizing different dimensions: The art of higher dimensions
 - Dark Energy: Detecting and studying the invisible
 - The Big Rip: How will the universe end, in a whimper or a bang?
 - What is Real? Quantum mechanics and the nature of reality
 - Making Little Bangs: How particle accelerators explore the quantum world
 - Multiverse: science, science fiction, metaphysics, philosophy, or religion?

Location, location, location



Pick a name, time, and place

- Give your café a memorable, catchy name.
- Set a time with your audience in mind: when would they be available?
- Pick an accessible venue: coffeehouse, pub, bookstore, student center, mall, etc.
- Keep the venue's logistics in mind: A/V? Easy to get to? Flexible seating arrangements?, etc.

Promote Your Cafe



- See sciencecafe.org's "Tips for Promoting Your Café."
- Use electronic networks and social media: Facebook, Twitter, Meet-up, etc.
- Post to online listservs, calendars, and electronic bulletin boards.
- Send a calendar listing to your local papers and professional bulletins/newsletters.
- Put your café on the map at sciencecafes.org



Promote your Cosmic Cafe

- **Use these 3 promotional resources on the sciencecafes.org/cosmic-cafes:**
 - *Fabric of the Cosmos* specific messages for print and electronic listings
 - Customizable Cosmic Cafe flier for posting on bulletin boards in strategic locations.
 - Customizable press release about Cosmic Cafés for articles and sidebars in print media

Prepare your speaker

- E-mail, meet, or talk with your speaker before the cafe
- Be specific about his/her role getting a conversation started.
- Emphasize the informal atmosphere
(not a lecture: no podium, no slides, etc.).
- Give them *Cosmic Cafe* resources for speakers:
 - Tips for Discussing Technical Topics with Diverse Audiences
 - Summary of the Time, Space, Quantum, and Multiverse TV episodes
 - Tips for Helping a General Audience understand Time, Space, Quantum, and Multiverse



Fine-tune

- **Recruit volunteers** (very helpful for helping set up and run cafes)
 - Contact universities, science-related businesses, student organizations, etc.
- **Finalize details**
 - Photocopy/gather handouts, evaluation, brochures, etc.
 - Decide how you will use the *FABRIC* coasters.
 - Review any video and check any required equipment.
 - Visit the venue, if possible, and double-check the date, time, set-up, AV, etc.
 - Confirm your speaker's availability. Restate the following:
 - ▶ Give brief topic overview to start a conversation, about 10 minutes.
 - ▶ Dress casually.
 - ▶ Come prepared with some general discussion questions.

Fine-tune a Cosmic Cafe

- **Resources to familiarize the speaker with Cosmic Cafés**

- Tips for Preparing the Speaker (at sciencecafes.org)
- Tips for Discussing Technical Topics with Diverse Audiences (*FABRIC* website)
- Schedule for your Cosmic Café to review with the expert (*FABRIC* website)
- Tips for Helping a General Audience Understand Time/Space/Quantum/Multiverse (*FABRIC* website)
- Video clips (*FABRIC* website)

- **Spread the word**

- Continue promoting your café by printing flyers and posting them in strategic locations.
- Send *FABRIC*-specific online reminders with the final details to potential audience members.

The Cosmic Coasters



- NOVA has printed a set of 20 *cosmic cafe* coasters, each with a separate multiple-choice question.
- There are three main times for café attendees to use the questions printed on the coasters:
 - while settling in, as a fun game to play with others at the table
 - during the conversation, as a source of interesting questions to ask the speaker
 - after the event, as an easy way to get to the *FABRIC* website and further explore the café topic
 - email getinvolved@wgbh.org to request coasters for your cafe

Cosmic Cafe In Action - Sample Agenda

While they come in: Trivia Contest or Video Clips

Cafe Kick-off and welcome

Brief Introduction by Moderator

Video Clip(s)

Presentation by guest speaker(s)

Group discussion

Schmoozing

Cafe in Action (Cont'd)

✓ Arrive Early

- Check A/V, seating arrangements, video projector/monitor, etc.
- Set out forms, sign-up sheet, giveaways, coasters, handouts, etc.

✓ Break the Ice

- Encourage participants to answer the questions on *The Fabric of the Cosmos* coasters.
- Show video clip

✓ Start a Conversation

- Introduce the speaker and let him/her pick up where the video left off.
- Engage audience with *FABRIC*-specific discussion starters. (See *FABRIC* website)
- Watch audience reactions. Pick up on things that are of particular interest.
- Encourage audience members to answer each other's questions.

✓ Wrap Up

- Circulate sign-up sheet and evaluation.
- Announce upcoming related cafés and events.
- Encourage continued discussion.

Evaluate your Cafe

- **Take notes** for the next time you do a café.
 - What got the biggest reaction? Sparked the most conversation?
 - Did the audience look comfortable and engaged?
 - Did conversation continue after the official end of the café?
 - Would you work with the speaker again?
- **Complete questionnaire** to pinpoint how we can improve our resources and support.
 - Complete the Inverness café organizer's evaluation form.

Keep it Going....

- Had a great café?
- Why not start a series?
- Visit sciencecafes.org's "Grow a Café" page to find out how to cultivate and grow additional science cafés.




sciencecafes.org POWERED BY NOVA

WHAT IS A CAFE?

Welcome!

Whether you are looking for a science café near you, are interested in organizing a science café, or are just plain curious, you'll find everything you need to know about science cafés on this site.



Find a local cafe!

Looking for a science café near you? Enter your location, zip code or click on the map to find science cafés and organizations in your area.

More >

✓ Like Maiken Lilley, Jonathan Ellenberger and 55 others like this. · Admin Page · Insights

Jeanne DAscoli
The timing of your new website couldn't be better! We've started to plan our launch some great discussions. Looking forward to hearing about your experiences - and!
August 26, 2011 at 8:28 pm

sciencecafes.org
We would love to hear what you think of our website redesign! #sciencecafes
August 26, 2011 at 6:57 pm

COSMIC Cafés

THANK YOU!

For any questions or comments please contact NOVA by emailing getinvolved@wgbh.org