



CHELTENHAM
Festivals

Fame Lab
TALKING SCIENCE

FameLab[®] UK
Participant Guide

Contents

Welcome from FameLab and Cheltenham Festivals

About Cheltenham Festivals

- Our Vision, Mission and Values

About FameLab

- Brief History
- Aim & Objectives
- The 3 C's

FameLab Conditions

- The Competition
- Eligibility
- Support from your Hub Organisations
- FameLab Training
- Support Materials
- Collaboration and Opportunities
- Ensuring Quality

The Contestants

- Application
- Benefits for the Contestants
- Managing Expectations

How it works

- The Rules
- Heats and Video Submission
- Props
- Semi Finals and Final
- Prizes

The Judges

- Judging Panel
- Judging Criteria
- Scoring

The FameLab Training

- Initial Regional Training
- National Masterclass

The Final and Beyond

- The National Final
- The International Masterclass and Final
- Alumni Network

Timeline

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Technical Guidelines and Set-up Instructions



Welcome from FameLab and Cheltenham Festivals

Cheltenham Festivals is excited that you have decided to take part in FameLab UK. We see our role as providing a platform to encourage scientists including social scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians to find their voices to inspire and excite the public imagination. Using the insights drawn from our experience we aim to develop the next generation of science communicators in the UK.

With our successful track record in facilitating FameLab around the world, you can be confident that Cheltenham Festivals' FameLab will deliver a world class competition. To ensure the quality of FameLab is consistent around the world, it is important to us that every applicant taking part in the competition feels included and benefits in some way from the entire experience.

This guide is designed to help you understand FameLab and what is expected as you begin this journey with us. The elements that are essential – quality, networking, training, the importance of follow-up, and the judging criteria of content, clarity and charisma.

Welcome to the FameLab family and we look forward to working with you.

Marieke Navin, Science Festival Head of Programming

Sarah Cooksley, Head of Learning and Participation

Khazana Rasool-McLaughlin, FameLab Co-ordinator



About Cheltenham Festivals

Cheltenham Festivals is a registered charity based in Cheltenham, England.

Bringing joy, sparking curiosity, connecting communities, and inspiring change year-round with four world-class Festivals in Jazz, Science, Music and Literature, and charitable programmes for education, community, and talent development.

With programming that features the very best international artists, performers and speakers; unique experiences; and showcases up and coming talent, Cheltenham Festivals is at the centre of the UK's cultural scene and boasts an enviable international reputation as leaders in our field.

Our Vision

A world in which everyone can explore and create culture

Experiencing and producing culture enables individuals, communities and society to thrive. We actively invite the participation and contribution of all people by producing world-class Festivals and innovative Learning & Participation programmes which are inclusive by design and which promote cultural equity so that everyone can access the same opportunities without disadvantage. We work in partnership to address specific societal concerns in order to maximise the relevance, scale and impact of what we do.

Our Mission

We collaborate to create experiences which bring joy, spark curiosity, connect communities and inspire change

We want everyone to feel invited to engage with the best of music, science and the written and spoken word through our Festivals and programmes in order to increase well-being and belonging, to inspire the art of the possible, and to effect positive change. We do this by building trust with stakeholders over time; engaging in dialogue with audiences, participants and partners; and thinking creatively with others to innovate for the future.

Our Values

Collaboration, Inclusion, Innovation, Integrity, Sustainability

About FameLab

Brief History

FameLab is the largest, public facing, science communication competition and training programme in the world. FameLab is a registered trademark of Cheltenham Festivals, who created the programme in 2005 in partnership with NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) and with sponsorship and in-kind support from Pfizer, Silicon 19, Channel 4 and The Daily Telegraph. They were joined by the Research Councils of the UK, and in 2006 by the British Council.

Thanks to a 14-year partnership with the British Council, FameLab has run in over 30 countries across the world together with more than 200 local partner organisations. This vibrant global network brought together over 40,000 scientists and engineers who were able to engage with international audiences.

Although our partnership with the British Council has come to an end, Cheltenham Festivals is delighted to continue FameLab with several international partners. FameLab continues as an online experience across the world each year with several countries.

Cheltenham Science Festival, since its inception in 2001, has a track record of finding and developing new talent in communicating science and engineering to a wider public. FameLab builds on that informal work, using a high-profile national event to attract those with the potential to share their enthusiasm for science and technology.

We have refined FameLab over the years, with a more focused vision of how it can encourage, reward and promote science communication throughout the world. We have defined the target audience of lay adults. We have narrowed the entry criteria to concentrate on those studying or working in science including social sciences, engineering, technology and mathematics, to help them find outlets for communication without abandoning their own work. This has allowed us to deliver a better-quality experience to those entrants, more detailed and constructive feedback, and more help after the events in pursuing opportunities in public engagement with science and technology.

Cheltenham Festivals realises that in another setting, FameLab might be quite different. Without the well-established science communication infrastructure that exists in the UK, there might be no value in restricting entry to practicing scientists and engineers. In a geographically scattered population, it might make more sense to invite applications by video as well as live performances. Where science education resources are limited, it might make no sense to limit the intended audience to adults. Variations to the FameLab competition format are always evolving to make this competition the most important science communication competition in the world. Whilst these variations are valued all must be approved by Cheltenham Festivals prior to commencement.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of FameLab is to encourage scientists including social scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians to find their voices and inspire and excite the public imagination.

To achieve this aim FameLab has the objectives:

- Encourage and enable science-related researchers to communicate their work with the public in an engaging and exciting way.
- Create an active, international community of science-related researchers who are confident and skilled in communicating their research with the public.
- Facilitate an international network of trainers and institutions sharing resources, best practice and opportunities to support science communication.
- To find and support the next generation of Science Communicators to be future Cheltenham Science Festival speakers.

FameLab also meets higher societal requirements to:

- Generate public science appreciation. Generate a wider audience that enjoys science and advocate science as a beneficial societal endeavour.
- Break down the perceived barriers between scientists and the public.
- Provide a recognised and highly sought after source of quality science presenters for media, schools and other science communication networks.

The 3 C's

The principles of good science communication through FameLab are encapsulated in the 3 C's of Content, Clarity and Charisma. It is essential that Masterclass trainers reinforce the 3 C's as part of their delivery.

Content

The content of the presentations MUST be scientifically accurate. If the topic chosen has controversy or uncertainty around it, then the presentation must acknowledge the opposing views. The scientific topic presented should be well chosen to suit the audience.

Clarity

Clarity is critical for effective science communication. The structure of the talk is important, as well as making sure the audience and judges can follow the talk and are left with an understanding of the scientific concept chosen.

Charisma

The audience and judges should be left inspired and enthused about science. The presenter must have that hard-to-describe but unmistakable quality of charisma. The winner will clearly be the one who makes the science easy to listen to, entertaining, exciting, who is not only able to communicate the science but who can share their passion for it.

FameLab Conditions

Cheltenham Festivals is working in partnership with Regional Organisations in individual regions in the UK called Hubs. Each Hub will have exclusive permission to run their own Regional FameLab competitions in partnership with Cheltenham Festivals under the following conditions:

1. The Competition

- Each Hub will assure that FameLab will run under the quality assurance guidelines of Cheltenham Festivals.
- The competition title shall be FameLab plus the name of the region (e.g. "FameLab UK Scotland) as approved by Cheltenham Festivals.
- The competitions shall be run according to the same key values of maintaining quality, providing training and offering follow up for the participants.
- The competition shall be open to contestants regardless of any discriminatory factors that is related to protected characteristics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender.
- Criteria of entrance, based on age or occupation shall be agreed with Cheltenham Festivals, usually 21 and over.
- Each contestant shall have 3 minutes to present any scientific, engineering, mathematical or medical topic of their choice, with no PowerPoint or other electronic presentation and limited use of props.
- Judging panels shall apply the same criteria of quality of content, clarity of presentation and charisma in assessing the contestants' presentations.
- Each judging panel shall include respected experts in each of these fields:
 - science including social sciences, engineering, mathematics, or medicine
 - live communication
 - communication through the media
- One judge may be an expert in more than one field. The number of judges shall not be less than three or more than five on one panel.

2. Eligibility

FameLab is trying to find people who want to talk about their science, not the people who have already shifted into science communication or promotion as a full-time career.

- **We welcome:**
 - Lecturers in science including social sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics or subjects, including specialist science teachers with a science degree.
 - Researchers who use existing research or meta-studies – they don't have to be getting their hands dirty
 - People who apply science including social sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics – for example, patent clerks, statisticians, computer technicians, consultants to industry
 - Postgraduate students of science including social sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics (over 21)
 - People who apply science including social sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics in the armed forces or government bodies
 - People who apply science including social sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics in industry or business

- **Sorry we can't accept people who are:**
 - Press or PR officers, even for science-related organisations
 - Artists who work on science-related themes
 - Performers whose shows are about science or engineering
 - Science centre staff who work exclusively or mainly with the public
 - Journalists and broadcasters (as their main or only job)
 - Non-specialist school teachers

Please note the dates of all stages of the competition, if you successfully progress to the next round you will need to attend all required events.

3. Support from your Hubs Organisation

Initial training and guidance will be provided by your Hub either live or digital along with advice and support to assist you in participating in FameLab. The FameLab Co-ordinator in your selected region will be in touch with you after completing an application and will be your first point of contact in the early stages of the competition.

4. FameLab Training

Applicants shall receive an online or live training in communicating science to a live audience before submitting a video entry or after applying. Process may vary depending on each Hub, please check with your FameLab Hub Organisation. This training for the participants may be overseen and delivered by an experienced trainer(s) with competency in communications skills training.

Winners from each region will attend a FameLab National Masterclass over two days in Cheltenham in May of each competition year. This training will be fully funded by Cheltenham Festival including the cost of travel and accommodation for each finalist. The National Masterclass will be delivered by an approved FameLab Masterclass trainer.

5. Support Materials

We encourage participants to visit our [FameLab YouTube Channel](#) where you will find archive videos of past FameLab contestants. For updates and information be sure to bookmark the [Cheltenham Festivals website](#).

6. Collaboration and Opportunities

Cheltenham Festivals will offer all Regional winners the chance to take part in the FameLab UK National Final with additional opportunities to get more involved during the Cheltenham Science Festival in June. The overall National winner will represent the UK in the digital International Final in November.

7. Ensuring Quality

FameLab prides itself on producing high quality finalists who will continue to apply themselves to their science and to their public engagement, no matter what forms that may take. The quality of the competition is ensured through clear entry criteria, recruitment of articulate expert judges and a high standard of Masterclass training and delivery.

The Contestants

The ideal FameLab participants are early career scientists including social scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians who are trying to find their voices and inspire and excite the public imagination. Please note that full time science communicators are not eligible.

Application

All interested participants from across the UK can apply online via the [Apply Now](#) link under The Competition section on our [FameLab webpage](#). Applications will come centrally to Cheltenham Festivals and distributed to each Hub, based on applications. Participants will be contacted directly by their Hub and invited to an initial online training and then asked to submit their video entry directly to their Regional Hub Organisations. Your Hub will advise all applicants how to submit their video.

Benefits for the Contestants

Contestants enter the FameLab competition for a number of reasons, and most enter to see if they can perform in front of a live audience. FameLab offers Masterclass training, open to all the contestants, which gives advice on live performances, some enter FameLab to get more skills in performing. Judges' comments and individual feedback has proved to be the most beneficial to participants.

Despite being in competition with each other, entrants tend to form spontaneous networks during the regional heats and between the finalists. For some, sharing experiences and information with other early- and mid-career scientists has been one of the most inspiring aspects of FameLab.

A crucial part of the FameLab experience is having that space, time and the opportunity for this networking to happen, and the right supportive atmosphere.

Managing Expectations

Few contestants enter FameLab for fame and TV opportunities. But some people have been disappointed when after completing the FameLab process, they have not immediately become the next TV personality. Please enter the competition with an open mind and be patient as opportunities may take time.

How it works

The Rules

The rules of FameLab are few, but crucial:

- Participants have three minutes to present any scientific (including social sciences), technology, engineering, mathematical or medical topic of their choice.
- Participants cannot use a PowerPoint, other electronic presentation or audio recording.
- Participants can only use the props that they can carry onto stage themselves.
- If participants make it through the Heats to the Regional Final they will have to prepare a second presentation (which can be on the same topic but must be demonstrably different in content).
- If participants win the regional competition and make it through to the National Final, they must prepare a presentation that is different to the one used in their regional final.

Heats and Video Submission

After completing an online application to take part in FameLab, participants will be contacted directly by their Hub and invited to an initial online training and then asked to submit their video entry directly to their Regional Hub Organisations. The video submissions will act as your regional heats, Hub Organisations will advise all applicants how to submit their video.

Video submissions should include:

- Up to three minutes long (content will not be judged after this time limit)
- No editing or special effects
- No other people or excessive props
- No background music (unless this is what you are talking about)
- Remember the 3 Cs – content, clarity and charisma.

Recording quality will not be assessed but obviously the clearer it is the better it can be judged.

Props

You are allowed to use props in FameLab, however be mindful about the types of props used as they can either work for or against you, also keep in mind your safety and those around you. The rule of thumb at FameLab, be sure you can safely bring your prop onto stage and take it off stage yourself.

In the past, some of the most impressive entrants have been the ones who could walk on with nothing and get across a difficult technical subject with nothing but their voice and some simple gestures. Remember that no PowerPoint presentations may be used, and writing or drawing on paper is discouraged.

You can find some top tips for your video submission in **Appendix 1: Technical Guidelines and Set-up Instructions**.

Regional Semi-Final / Final

Depending on the number of successful video submissions per region, Hub Organisations may choose to hold either semi-finals or just a final.

The following guidance would apply to either option:

- The details of the Regional Semi-Final / Final (date, time, location) will be decided and promoted by your Hub. The final will be in front of a live audience as a key part of FameLab in bringing science communicators together with the public.
- In the Regional Semi-Final / Final the contestants have to deliver a different three-minute presentation to the one in their video submission.
- The same rules about props and no power point apply.
- After the presentation, the judges will ask questions of each contestant. They may want to probe the content, testing whether a candidate really has a good understanding and can respond clearly to follow-on questions, or whether they are putting a topic in its true context.
- Other questions might relate to the participant themselves: how do they see science communication fitting into their career?
- While the judges deliberate, the audience may be entertained or asked to complete a survey.
- When the judges have returned, the chair of judges will announce once winners and two runners up and some regions may even do an audience vote. The judges will also give positive feedback and words of encouragement to each contestant.

Please note you may be asked for photographs (or film footage) which will help with publicity later.

Prizes

Regional winners' prizes can vary per region; however, the ultimate prize is a place in the FameLab UK National Masterclass and the Final, hosted by Cheltenham Science Festival. This includes UK travel and accommodation in Cheltenham for both the Masterclass in May and to attend the Science Festival inclusive of a Science Festival experience package in June for each regional winner. The costs of these will be covered by Cheltenham Festivals.

All Regional winners are asked to complete UK Regional Winners' Form. This information will be used by Cheltenham Festivals to invite finalists to the National Masterclass and also to produce a programme which will be distributed at the National Final and will be shared with all finalists as a keepsake. It will include a bit about each winner: their name, region, likes, dislikes, what you are working on and your social media contacts.

The Judges

Judging Panel

An expert balanced judging panel will ensure that all aspects of science communication are assessed. Experts in the fields of live presentation, television, science journalism or science are recruited with the underlying traits of being passionate about science and its communication to the public, and supportive of young talent. Each panel combines different areas of expertise, maximising not only the ability of the judges to weigh up different strengths and weaknesses, but also to give useful feedback even to candidates who don't get beyond the first round.

Being critiqued by top science communicators, scientists and TV personalities and getting constructive feedback has been picked out by many FameLab entrants as the most highly appreciated and valued aspect of the competition.

The judging panel is usually made up of three to four experts, this may vary in each Hub.

Judging Criteria

The judging criteria are strict across all of the FameLab competitions. We believe that the 3 Cs - Content, Clarity and Charisma are central for the identification of effective science communicators to an adult lay audience.

Content

The content of the presentations MUST be scientifically accurate. If the topic chosen has controversy or uncertainty around it, then the presentation must acknowledge the opposing views. The scientific topic presented should be well chosen to suit the audience.

Clarity

Clarity is critical for effective science communication. The structure of the talk is important, as well as making sure the audience and judges can follow the talk and are left with an understanding of the scientific concept chosen.

Charisma

The audience and judges should be left inspired and enthused about science. The presenter must have that hard-to-describe but unmistakable quality of charisma. The winner will clearly be the one who makes the science easy to listen to, entertaining, exciting, who is not only able to communicate the science but who can share their passion for it.

Feedback

One of the most valuable parts of the experience is time for constructive judges' feedback, especially for candidates who don't make it through to the next round. For stages of the competition conducted online, feedback may be given in written form. Judges will always try to give positive encouragement and mention the good points of the talk.

Scoring

A judging scoresheet with the contestant names and order of presentation will be given to each judge ahead of the competition. Judges write comments for content and mark each contestant out of 5 for the three C's. A decision is usually not based on the scoring alone - the judges discuss, argue and finally reach a consensus on the session winners.

FameLab Training

Science Communication training is a significant part of FameLab, and all participants will be entitled to some form of training to help them in the competition and in their future careers.

Initial Regional Training

The regional training will be provided by your Hub Organisations with guidance and support from Cheltenham Festivals.

Initial training includes but not limited to:

- an introduction to the 3 Cs,
- How to make science accessible to all
- how to record a submission video
- how to present research

This training for the participants may be overseen and delivered by an approved FameLab trainer or your trained Regional Hub Organisation.

National Masterclass

If you become the winner for your region, you will be invited to exclusive two-day Masterclass training, which will be organised and run by Cheltenham Festivals in Cheltenham in early May of each year. This intensive two-day training gives the finalists a chance to bond and network together and helps create an atmosphere of trust that makes it easier to take risks. Breaking through personal boundaries is a vital part of becoming a more confident presenter. This shared experience encourages the finalists to form a network of mutual support and encourages future collaborations.

The National Masterclass will be a mixture of talks, exercises and activities (both group and individual) on communicating through different forms and media. You will also hear from past FameLab participants to help give insights to the journey ahead.

During the two-day training, sessions may include preparing and delivering a live talk, interviewing and being interviewed, having "stage presence" and experience. Alongside this, advice and tips about the reality of working in media will help develop a realistic perspective to finalists.



The Final and Beyond

The National Final

This event will be fully funded, organised and managed by Cheltenham Festivals and will take place live at the Cheltenham Science Festival in June of each year.

The winner of the UK national final will go on to represent the UK at the FameLab International live online final in November. Cheltenham Festivals will communicate directly with the National Winner in the lead up to the competition.


The winner, two runners up and an audience winner will receive a trophy and additional the overall winner will also be awarded STEM related prizes.

International Masterclass and Final

The UK National winner will qualify for the International Masterclass hosted online by Cheltenham Festivals in the October of each year and entry to the International Final hosted online by Cheltenham Festivals in November. The winner of this final will be crowned the international winner and will be hosted at the Cheltenham Science Festival in the following June.

Alumni Network

As well as encouraging Hub Organisations to maintain their own Alumni Networks, Cheltenham Festivals will host a FameLab Alumni Network where we will aim to create further opportunities for National and International FameLab participants including but not limited to becoming FameLab Masterclass Trainers and judges and using our networks and platforming potential to help develop the next generation of Science Communicators.



Timeline

The following is an outline guide for FameLab UK, from the start of the cycle to the live National Final in June and the online International Final in November. Be sure to visit your Hub and Cheltenham Festivals websites for specific dates.

| Month | Tasks |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October | <ul style="list-style-type: none">UK Applications open. |
| December | <ul style="list-style-type: none">UK Applications close. |
| January - February | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hubs to liaise directly with regional applicants.Applicants attend online training. |
| March | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Applicants invited to submit video entry to Hubs.Successful applicants progress to next round. |
| April | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hub Organisations host live Regional Finals.Deadline for Regional winner's info to be sent to Cheltenham Festivals. |
| May | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regional winners to attend two-day National Masterclass live in Cheltenham. |
| June | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Regional winners to attend FameLab UK National Final at Cheltenham Science Festival.UK National Winner announced. |
| October | <ul style="list-style-type: none">UK National Winner to attend the online International Masterclass. |
| November | <ul style="list-style-type: none">UK National Winner to represent the UK at the online FameLab International Final. |

Appendix 1

Technical Guidelines and Set-up Instructions

To help prepare participants to take part in an online version of the competition we have put together some technical guidance and set up instructions to help prepare online participants.

This is to check connection stability and speed; we recommend each participant do this test in the location they will be for any live online event. This information should help all online participants.

FameLab Online

Remember that the judges will be focusing on you and your presentation skills. The following are suggestions for you to help the judges see and hear you as clearly as possible, and to create a great event for audiences to enjoy.

Internet

We recommend a minimum of 5 Mbps download and 2 Mbps upload for a stable and consistent stream of video and audio. We will have to drop down to audio-only mode if connection is weak. If you can, try plugging in directly to your internet rather than connecting over Wi-Fi.

[Please click here to test your connection stability and speed.](#)

If your results are below the minimum requirements stated above, please let your Hub Organisation know as soon as possible so that they can support you.

Please keep in mind whether anyone else may be planning to use your internet at the same time as the live final. If possible, please ensure that only you and your device use the internet for the duration the live final.

Lighting

- All cameras capture the best quality video when there is a good light source.
- Extremes of light or dark make filming difficult, so avoid a location with very bright direct sunlight or a very dark area.
- Side or front lighting is best: if you are sitting on a clock looking towards 12 then the light should be between 10 and 2 for a neutral, well-lit look.
- Soft natural window light is ideal. If this is not possible, place a warm lamp in front of you in the position described above.

Sound

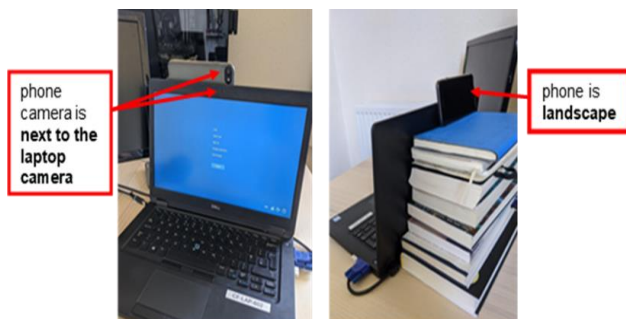
- Please record inside to help to avoid background noise being picked up through your microphone. Please minimise other sounds in the room as much as you can (turn off any machines or fans that may create excess white noise).
- We recommend using a USB microphone and headphones that will better minimise background noise. If you don't have access to a USB microphone, then a built-in microphone on a set of headphones will work fine.
- If you are not wearing headphones, please stay close to the camera/microphone for the best audio.

Camera tips

- Please use the best camera you have access to for the live final: you may use your phone, but keep in mind you would need to log onto the online platform from it.
- If using your phone, ensure that it:
 - is set up in a stable position and landscape at all times
 - is fully charged
 - is in airplane mode with do not disturb switched on
- If you own a dedicated camera with mic and are confident to use this:
 - The highest quality - 1080p will be ideal
 - Avoid high frame rates, aim for 24fps, 25fps or 30fps (higher is not necessary and impacts the amount of light required).

Eye-line

- Whatever device you are using please make sure that the camera lens sits at or above eye level, no higher than your hairline.
- Once your camera is in place, remember not to sit too close to the camera. Position yourself far enough away to capture your shoulders and your entire face with some room to spare.
- Be careful to look directly at the camera filming you throughout (your phone camera for example). It is more important to have eye contact on your recording device than on the video call! We recommend placing a small, brightly coloured dot sticker directly above your camera lens to help draw your eye to the correct lens.
- It is a good idea to practise the set-up described above and test the recording on your phone and review what the recorded shot looks like.
- Here is a test set up example:
-



Background

- Avoid having bright windows or lamps in the background – lighting should come from in front of you.
- Please avoid messy or distracting backgrounds if possible. Aim for a simple clean background.
- Do not use a virtual background, or background animations, slides, graphics or green screen effects since these are not within the spirit and rules of FameLab.
- We will discuss backgrounds further in the masterclass, but in the meantime, have a look at other science communicators online and consider what you like about their backgrounds, setups, lighting etc. For example, a simple house plant or bookshelf gives the shot some depth and colour.

Top tips

We aim to keep to the structure of FameLab as closely as possible whether live or online.

- Your talk will need to be presented in one take – just as if you were on stage, you will not be able to restart unless in exceptional circumstances. Only if you have technical issues (your internet freezes or your camera falls, for example) will you be allowed to restart your talk.
- The usual rule of ‘no notes’ still stands. The judges will be able to tell if you are reading from notes or a script!
- Do not use background animations, slides, graphics or green screen effects since these are not within the spirit and rules of FameLab.
- Your talk must be no longer than 3 minutes. We can arrange for you to see a timer countdown on screen if this is helpful or do the usual ‘wave’ with 30 seconds remaining and a loud horn sound at 3 minutes, or if you would find this distracting you can choose not to see the timer. The host will stop you if you go far beyond 3 minutes.
- Any props you use must be able to carry yourself.
- You may participate standing up or sitting down.
- You can wear whatever you would usually wear to the stage version of FameLab. As you would for the stage version, please avoid branded clothing and clothes or accessories that may be distracting or create unwanted sound that may be picked up by the microphone.



CHELTENHAM
Festivals

Fame Lab
TALKING SCIENCE

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