Panelist Guide

At every Panel, the facilitator will start by introducing IGNITE and providing background information about gender diversity in STEM. Then, each panelist* will take no more than 3 minutes to share their story, incorporating 1-2 physical visual aids (see IGNITE Visual Aid Guide for examples). The second half of the panel is an interactive Q&A discussion with the students.

Prepare your Story Ahead of Time by Addressing These Questions

*Remember, the total length of your story should be no longer than 3 minutes.*

1. Introduce yourself: Name, Pronouns (optional), Job, and Company. Give a brief description of what your job looks like day to day in simple language. Think of the stereotypes that exist around your field (e.g. all Computer Scientists act like geeky characters seen on TV, STEM is all about coding, etc) and emphasize the different reality you’ve experienced. (15 seconds)

2. Why did you decide to speak with IGNITE Students today? Why do you care that they know about STEM careers? (30 seconds)

3. What did you like to do when you were the students’ age? Start your story when you were the age of the students, and describe what you were like then. What were your favorite subjects or hobbies? Share your first visual aid here: a photo of yourself when you were around the students’ age. (30 seconds)

4. Your experience inspires IGNITE students to find success despite the struggles they may face. Share about obstacles you have overcome to get where you are today and some useful ways you and others navigate gender and/or racial inequities and work to create a more just workplace. Don't be afraid to be honest here; authenticity helps students relate! (30 seconds)

5. How did you find your interest in STEM? What educational/academic or other choices did you make to lead to your career? Why would you suggest that students take STEM classes at school now? (30 seconds)

6. What do you like most about your job? Why would you encourage this choice for young women**? Share your second visual aid: something exciting from your career, like your badge or a uniform, a tool you use at work, or a project or product you’ve worked on. (30 seconds)

Key Reminders

- Practice sharing your story ahead of time. Remember to limit yourself to 3 minutes!
- Bring 1-2 visual aids related to your story. For in-person panels, pass visual aids around so students can interact with them.
- Keep your responses to students’ questions short (about 30 seconds).
- Remember you are talking to kids, so be sure to explain technical words or acronyms.
• Keep it PG! This is a professional event; please use student-appropriate language with no swearing.
• Speak slowly and clearly and look around the room at students. Tip: If there is a translator, pause between sentences to allow time for translation.
• Be energetic and approachable! Especially for young students, sitting still for an extended time can be challenging. Your energy goes a long way toward keeping them engaged.
• Be positive! It’s good to share that school was hard or life had challenges, but focus on the lessons learned and growth that came from those experiences.
• Encourage students to take technical classes and seek out STEM activities that will help develop technical skills.
• For students in grades 8 and below, focus on their immediate future (school/extracurricular, not college/career).
• For Elementary Panels, think about what sparked your interest in STEM as a child, including the activities you enjoyed as well as what you learned in school.
• Help students understand that they don’t need to be perfect in life to achieve great things.
• Listen to others and avoid repeating similar answers or comments; we want the students to hear as many perspectives as possible!
• Remember that you’re entering a school environment and disruptions may occur. If there are any disruptions that detract from your experience, please don’t hesitate to let us know.
• Please bring anything you need to feel comfortable (water, snacks, etc)
• To invite students to interact with you, ask career-relevant questions during your share that students can raise their hands or shout out responses to
  ○ Ex. I work at {e-commerce company}), raise your hand if you’re ever received a package from us!
  ○ Ex. Working in STEM allows me to take vacations, shout out where you’d go on vacation!

Specific to Virtual Panels:
  ○ Make sure your Zoom background is professional. Download an IGNITE background!
  ○ Ensure your internet connection is strong and secure, and test your mic and webcam in advance.
  ○ Be present! Block out the full event time on your calendar to limit the possibility of interruptions or distractions.
  ○ Before you log in, please make sure your Zoom name is your first and last name so our host knows to let you in.
  ○ Make eye contact by looking at your camera when speaking.
During the “lightning round,” at the end of your event, prepare to share something you wish you knew at the students’ age in 1-2 sentences.

We invite students to turn on their webcams, but please note that some may decide to keep their cameras off.

To protect student privacy, do not take any screenshots or recordings during your event.