If you’ve ever gone fishing, you know that once you find a good location, you want to stay there. So, you often drop an anchor in the water to keep your boat from drifting away.

Communication anchors can improve your communication to the general public. They are language devices that help you explain complex topics in relatable ways and also keep your listeners on track as you navigate your explanations.

**Analogies**

One of the best types of anchors that I like to use is an analogy. Analogies give an audience a common idea to hold onto when learning new things (like my fishing example in my lead!) Analogies tell your listeners or readers that your research is like something from their daily life.

I work with some very clever writers and scientists. Here are some examples of analogies we’ve used:

- Intercropping is like a diversified stock portfolio.
- Riparian buffer zones are like hydraulic shock absorbers.
- Phenotyping give us information about plants just like our Fitbits do for us.
- Denitrifying bioreactors are like water filters used in our homes.
- Good potting soil is like a good road that allows cars to drive without slowing down.
- Genotyping maps are organized the way librarians organize books.

**Key Words**

Some of the very best key words to start using are the Society taglines! ASA’s is “Agronomy Feeds the World.” For those of you working in cotton production, you could use “Clothes the World!” Or for biofuels—“Fuels the World!” SSSA’s tagline is Soils Sustain Life. What area of soil science do you work in that keeps society running?

Another thing that attracts listeners and readers is using active verbs. (I hope that didn’t make you flash back to your middle school English teacher, but really, this is important, so please stick with me.) We are trained in writing scientific papers to write things like “Fisk et al. found in 1982 that…”. Or the common “Research has shown that…” That’s great for peer-reviewed journals but awful for public communications.

Use active verbs like helping, improving, decreasing, increasing, and healing. Note that none of these fall in the “jargon” category, like remediating, mitigating, etc., because that would break our “no jargon” rule of science communications. (See last month’s article about jargon: [https://bit.ly/2FAHLO7](https://bit.ly/2FAHLO7))

Other good key words are adjectives—words that describe nouns—like potential, successful, and prosperous. Are you looking for potential solutions to decrease greenhouse gases? Working to help farmers have a prosperous business with a changing climate? Those are positive, relatable statements.
Physical Demonstrations

When you are working with video or live public communications, you have an opportunity to do a physical demonstration. Let’s say you are working at field day and can’t have a PowerPoint slide behind you. You are talking about soil compaction and want to use the term “plow pan.” You could move your hands to show that roots meet a barrier where the soil is more compacted, right? Better yet, you could hold up prepared samples showing compacted soil with few roots compared with uncompacted soils that have a healthy root system.

Anchors help your audience understand your topic. They also show your audience that you are trying to work with them in your communications efforts. When scientists meet the public closer to their comfort level, it starts to build the necessary trust that will improve relationships on all sides!

Do you have a special analogy that you use to explain your research? A physical demonstration? I’d like to hear about it. Email me at sfisk@sciencesocieties.org.

S. Fisk, director of public and science communications

New Corporate Member

We welcome the following new corporate member as of 20 Dec. 2018:

Microbial ID, Inc., Newark, DE, Gold Level

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Corporate Membership is an effective component in your company’s outreach to agronomic, crop, soil, and environmental science professionals and students. Three corporate membership levels enable your company to interact with the Societies in ways that best fit your needs. All levels provide access to journal, meetings, membership, and recognition benefits, as well as special reduced rates for company-wide Digital Library subscriptions. And a Corporate Membership supports the missions of the Societies and the development of students in our professions.

Visit www.agronomy.org/membership/corporate for more information, or contact Eric Welsh at ewelsh@sciencesocieties.org or 608-268-4981.

doi:10.2134/csa2019.64.0224

AMS Frozen Soil Powered Auger Kit was designed to core through those dreaded frozen soil conditions. The Core Barrel Auger is equipped with carbide cutting teeth that are specifically designed to chew through tough frozen soil and pull relatively undisturbed cores inside the barrel.

Search “frozen soil auger kit” at www.ams-samplers.com to learn more.

Call us to discuss your needs at 208-226-2017 | 800-635-7330 or visit us online at www.ams-samplers.com.

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Together we can create a healthier world, one sample at a time.

Equipping the World to Sample the Earth

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