

Geoscience on television: a review of science communication literature in the context of geosciences

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Abstract. We thank the editor for his kind words, time and effort. We have incorporated his final comment. The paragraph now reads:

In academic interactions, whether on paper or at conferences or in seminars, conclusions are usually presented at the end (Fig. 2, right pyramid). This is in stark contrast to journalism where it is common to start with the conclusions (Fig. 2, left pyramid). This latter structure is called the inverted pyramid (Pottker 2003): the most important information comes first and the lead sentence answers the five w-questions: who? when? where? what? why? The rest of the facts are then presented in decreasing order of importance. Stewart and Nield argue that geoscientists can communicate more effectively with laymen when they invert the pyramid of their presentations (Stewart and Nield, 2013). The paper that first introduced the inverted pyramid (Somerville and Hassol, 2011) to geoscientists uses a down pointing triangle for the scientists communicating with peers and an up pointing triangle for scientists communicating with lay people to convey the message that “the scientific method trains scientists to begin with outlining the general academic context and then work through to some narrow research finding, which they then proceed to communicate. The starting point for the public, on the other hand, is the sharp question of ’so what?’, and addressing that successfully can take them deeper into the academic detail and wider context.” (Stewart 2016). Here, we use the convention used by journalists, where the inverted pyramid of communicating with lay people is a down pointing triangle. We recognize that this is a matter of personal preference and at the same time, that the different conventions used in different fields to communicate ideas like the inverted pyramid is a valid subject of academic study in its own right.