

School Guide- Planning your SFS virtual talk

This guide covers:

- Logistics and planning checklist
- Talk formats
- Talk themes
- FAQs

Logistics and planning checklist

Speakers for Schools (SFS) virtual talks are inspirational events that allow speakers to remotely connect with students in classrooms and share their unique insights and advice with young people.

A SFS virtual talk is generally between one speaker from the network who is paired with one school to deliver a talk with Q&A via a video calling platform. SFS have found that schools generally use Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Google Meet. You can find guidance on using these platforms [here](#).

Through online platforms, virtual talks enable leading figures in their industry or field to interact with classrooms across the UK and help broaden students' horizons and encourage students in their potential. They are also a chance for a real conversation with figures who are shaping the world today – ranging from real stories of how a speaker got to where they are, to how their industry is changing society as we know it.



Logistics and Planning Brief

SFS virtual talks are around **40 minutes to one hour long** which includes the Q+A. The theme, chosen video calling platform and format for the talk should be agreed with speakers in advance of the talk during your planning phone call. You can find more guidance on using video calling platforms [here](#).

You will need an Internet connection and a desktop or laptop with video calling capabilities.

Virtual talks are bespoke and depend on the individual speaker but fall into broader themes which can be seen [here](#). All talks should include an element of Q+A. Most speakers provide unique insights as successful figures in their field to help inform and encourage students, while others can be more specialised.

Below are key steps to follow when the planning for your talk:

1. Once introduced to your speaker/their office you will need to agree the date, time and chosen video calling platform for the talk. Please be sure to let SFS know when this is confirmed.
2. It is a requirement to have a phone call with your speaker/their office. Talks where speakers and schools have had a call often result in a stronger impact on students and a more successful session. During the phone call you should agree:
 - The format of the talk (more information below)
 - The chosen video calling platform (more information on video calling platforms [here](#))
 - Themes and key messages of the talk
 - Please be sure to advise your speaker on the audience for the talk (size, age, prior subject knowledge etc) and how you hope they will benefit from the session - this will help speakers prepare for their talk.
 - A teacher must be present at all times to run the event and moderate questions.
3. Test the chosen video calling platform and equipment with the speaker. We recommend that speakers and schools use a desktop or laptop computer for the virtual talk. Before the talk, we advise speakers and schools to arrange a time to test out the platform e.g. Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom etc. so that any technical issues (such as sharing a screen/presentation if required) can be addressed and resolved.
4. We do ask that students are prepared ahead of the talk so they know why the speaker is presenting and who they are, it is also a great opportunity to have students thinking about the talk and potential questions. Our Q&A Prep Sheets can be found [here](#).

[Please see our On the day hosting guide for top tips on how best to host your speaker, including the final event checklist, top tips for introducing your speaker and hosting Q&A!](#)

Talk formats

There are two main formats to be considered for your virtual talk; be sure to advise your speaker on the format that would best suit your students.

Both formats require an element of Q&A with the audience, which should be moderated by a teacher/member of SLT. More information about moderating Q&A and ensuring the talk is hosted well can be seen in our On the day hosting guide [here](#).

All virtual talks should be around 40-60 minutes long.

Interview

Ideal for a more informal conversation led by prepared student questions, not requiring any slides or a set 'talk.'

- Speaker and school have a phone call to agree the focus of the 'interview'; in some instances, questions need to be agreed in advance
- The interviewer could be a teacher or confident student; students can submit questions in advance
- Interview takes place for 20-30 minutes depending on speaker and school preference
- The session is then opened to any impromptu questions from the audience for the remainder of the session

Talk with Q+A

Ideal for speakers with a key message, subject or story they want to use as the focus of the event. Speakers may want to share a presentation and so test that their presentation can be shared during the talk.

The talk itself is about 20-25 minutes followed by Q&A with the audience for the rest of the session

- Speaker and school have a call to agree the focus of the talk and the context for their students so it strikes the right chord
- Q&A should be actively moderated and driven by the teacher, with 5 pre-prepared student questions to get the ball rolling
- Students should be ready to take part in a Q&A. Prep sheets are available on our website [here](#).

Themes remain the same as current guide for in-person. You can see further information [here](#).

FAQs

Who should organise a SFS virtual talk?

Given the nature of the speakers we work with, especially as a charity, the headteacher/senior leadership team will need to help with off-timetable arrangements. However, if the talk is taking place during the school timetable, a deputy staff member can assist with coordinating the logistics in the lead up. A teacher should be present throughout the virtual talk to introduce the talk and moderate student questions.

How long should a SFS virtual talk be?

SFS virtual talks are around 40-60 minutes long and require an element of Q+A. For more information about formats please see page 3.

What technical requirements do I need?

You will need an Internet connection and a desktop or laptop with video calling capabilities. For more information on video calling platforms please see our [technical guide](#).

What video calling platform should I use?

SFS have found that schools generally use Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Google Meet. You can find guidance on using these platforms [here](#). The speaker and the school will need to use the same video calling platform so please confirm with the speaker's office.

What will the speaker talk about?

The content and key messages of the talk should be agreed with your speaker in advance. Talks are bespoke and depend on the individual speaker, but fall into broader themes which can be seen [here](#). Most speakers provide unique insights as successful figures in their field to help inform and encourage students, while others can be more specialised.

How many students should we have in the audience?

Audience numbers should follow the school's safety guidelines on how many students are allowed in a classroom.

How should I introduce the speaker?

It is important to introduce the speaker and nature of the event to your students. On the day, please be sure to review the introduction with your speaker if possible. A template introduction can be found in our [on the day hosting guide](#).

How can I prepare students for the talk?

We do ask that students are prepared ahead of the talk so they know why the speaker is presenting and who they are, it is also a great opportunity to have students think about the talk and potential questions. Our Q+A prep sheets can be found [here](#).

What is the number one tip for a successful SFS virtual talk?

Having a phone call with the speaker/their office and agreeing on the key messages and themes of the talk is crucial to ensure a successful talk. Find out more about what should be agreed on the phone call on page 2.

Do your speakers have DBS checks? Our speakers are not DBS checked as they are guests hosted by teachers at the school and should not be left alone by teachers, unsupervised with students. The virtual talk should be moderated throughout by a teacher.