



How to

**TALK TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC
ABOUT WWF, or WWF 101**

Panda Ambassadors



World Wildlife Fund is known for saving wildlife, but we actually do a lot more. WWF is a big, complex organization working all over the planet on hundreds of projects that touch a wide array of subjects. Explaining all that can be complicated, so here is a primer to help you understand and talk about what WWF is and what we accomplish.

WWF101 – For Your Information

Wildlife is at the core of what we do

It's pretty obvious that WWF cares about wildlife—it's in the name, after all. Wildlife includes all those incredible, magnificent terrestrial species you already associate with us—pandas, tigers, elephants, rhinos—but it also includes marine and freshwater animals.

But wildlife is not all we do

Internationally, WWF is organized around six different goal areas: wildlife, oceans, freshwater, food, climate, and forests. Each goal deals with specific resources that we need to protect or manage better, and all are interrelated.

So why does a “wildlife organization” work on so many things that aren't wildlife?

Let's start with a little history:

WWF was established in 1961 as a literal fund for wildlife (again, hence the name). Conservation groups already existed to save and protect wildlife, but they lacked consistent funding. WWF began as more of a grant-giving operation, funding individual conservation projects around the globe.

As WWF's track record for success grew, so did our resources. We were then not only able to fund other organization's projects, but we could actually design and implement our own projects to fill in the gaps left by existing conservation organizations. Our remit expanded beyond protecting wildlife to protecting the wild places they inhabit. This method of working proved tremendously successful, and we've been expanding our portfolio of projects and our reach ever since.

Everything is connected

WWF now works to protect the future of nature. We work on so many different things because nature won't have a future unless we address the direct and indirect threats head-on. The direct threats to wildlife include things like poaching, animal trafficking, overfishing, unsustainable hunting, and wildlife crime. Indirect threats include things like habitat loss and degradation, pollution, and climate change.

With our six-goal approach, we directly protect nature while also reforming the systems and habits that cause it to be threatened in the first place. We're looking for nothing short of total transformation.

WWF is both a national organization and a global one

To the general public, WWF is one single, united entity. But it's a little more complicated than that.

WWF has offices all over the world, and a coordinating international office in Switzerland. Most country offices operate like independent organizations, with their own leadership, funding, and autonomy over projects. However, each WWF office is part of a tight-knit global network. We work closely together on projects, share resources, and agree on messaging, priorities, and structure together. We also work across borders—WWF's United States office works on projects all over the world, in close coordination with local offices.

This structure is incredibly beneficial. First of all, it allows offices with a larger or more affluent donor base to put those resources to work in areas of the world where they are most needed. Second, the independence given to each office allows them to function in a way that is best suited to their culture and environment. What works well for WWF-Japan may not work well for WWF-Kenya, WWF-Brazil, or WWF-UK. Decisions for each office are made by the people who live and work there every day. And finally, this structure means WWF is as diverse as the world itself, offering a range of perspectives and experience you won't find in any other organization.

The Panda Ambassador program is currently exclusive to WWF-US. But we're sharing our success stories with other offices around the world, who could decide to adopt the program and adapt it to their residents.

WWF is friends with (almost) everybody

To really change the world, we have to get everyone involved. That means working with other organizations, governments, businesses, and individuals. We want to make sure everyone considers nature in their decision making. We want to help the best, most eco-friendly businesses be even better, and we want to help the worst performers in a sector clean up their acts and start incorporating sustainability into their operations. The same goes for politicians, governments, organizations, and individuals. This approach is a major strength, and has led to some unlikely but extremely productive partnerships and collaborations.

WWF is also a strictly nonpartisan organization. We don't align with, back, or oppose any particular political party or candidates. Instead we focus on the issues—striving to find common ground and bring politicians together to enact positive change for nature.

Tips for Talking about WWF to the General Public

Focus on the issues that matter most to your audience

When talking about WWF to the general public, you don't have to explain everything we work on. Just give the top-line message that WWF is working to protect nature, and then give a few examples of how.

Because WWF's work touches so many different areas, you can really tailor your message to your audience and take the opportunity to talk to people about what matters to them. That might be climate change, healthy oceans, or sustainable food production. If you don't know what matters to your audience, start with something everyone can agree on, like saving the rain forest or keeping species from going extinct.

Talk about how our actions influence the world

We live in a global economy, and our choices as consumers have impacts—just because those impacts aren't locally felt doesn't mean they don't exist. Forests all over the world are being decimated to make room to produce ingredients for food we eat every day. The wood that makes up your furniture and your flooring had to come from somewhere. The energy you use to power your home and your car is contributing to climate change.

The goal isn't to make people feel bad about their choices, but just to let people know that our choices matter. What does an orangutan in Sumatra have to do with you? Plenty if you buy foods containing palm oil or shoes with rubber soles.

In some cases, easy alternatives exist. Let people know, for example, how easy it is to look for and purchase FSC-certified paper and wood products. And many utility companies offer the option to purchase wind or solar power to fuel your home. But in other cases, it's going to take a complete transformation of the industry, which is exactly what WWF is working on in the cases of palm oil, rubber, and other commodities.

Suggest action items

Don't just talk about what's wrong with the world—talk about what people can do to make a difference. Encouraging people to donate to WWF is important, but also give some options for actions individuals can take in their daily lives. Options can range from the simple (waste less food, take public transportation, call your congressperson), to the more difficult (shop for certified products, become a Panda Ambassador), to major commitments (install solar panels, run for political office).

Be hopeful, optimistic, and positive

One of the best things about WWF is the fact that the people who work here truly believe that we can make a difference. We know because we've seen the proof. From small, local success stories to major international victories for nature, we're helping to protect nature for future generations.

When talking to the public, focus on the fact that we are making progress toward our goals. We're facing serious problems, but these are problems that humans created, so humans can also solve them. But we're only going to be successful if we work together. We need everybody on board, doing their part. Together, anything is possible.