

Do's and Don'ts for Shark and Ray Awareness Day Messaging

Include a specific conservation-related ask for participants and give them a way to contribute/act while on-site.

Focus on solutions and a message of hope for the ocean and its inhabitants. Concern is a motivator to action! Provide scientific facts and be sure to focus on the solutions and impacts of individual and collective action.

Highlight the diversity of shark and ray species in your facilities, and in the wild.

Emphasize how much people are fascinated by sharks and rays, while focusing on those lesser-known species. Come out positively for sharks.

Engage with youth and children with excitement, sharing the many cool adaptations of different species.

Emphasize the role sharks and rays play in contributing to a healthy ocean ecosystem.

Share the collaborative work of AZA institutions and global scientists through AZA SAFE: Sharks and Rays.

Choose inclusive language in your messaging. Share actions anyone can do! i.e., choosing sustainable seafood.

Use clear, concise messaging about the causes of threat for sharks and rays. Overfishing is the primary threat for 100% of threatened sharks. Taking action that addresses excessive and unsustainable fishing practices, supporting sustainability when we shop, and supporting science-based conservation efforts and campaigns are ways we can help and be involved.

Assume visitors won't contribute or engage with the conservation ask.

Talk in terms of "doom and gloom" or focus on dire consequences of inaction. We don't want participants to leave feeling hopeless.

Only refer to the few species we see regularly in the media i.e. great white sharks, manta rays

Dwell on the negative or perpetuate the "scary" narrative around sharks. Neither be defensive - Myth-busting can be counter-productive.

Focus on statistics or irrelevant numbers or facts, you will lose the audience quickly. i.e., 100 million sharks killed annually, etc.

Focus on sharks as only "apex predators", as there are species that eat from the bottom of the food web. i.e., whale sharks, basking sharks

Exclude the immense amount of work and financial contributions of AZA-member facilities in elasmobranch research and science.

Use simplistic messaging that perpetuates racism, stereotypes, and negative attitudes towards other groups i.e., shark fin consumption.

Focus on one fishing practice (finning) or introduce too many threats faced by the thousands of species of sharks and rays. i.e., climate change, marine debris/plastics, loss of habitat, etc.