

# CHANGING THE COVID CONVERSATION

## Communications Cheat Sheet

Effective communication is always important in public health, but it's never been more important to understand the perceptions of Americans and modify your language accordingly. These recommendations are based on the "Changing the COVID Conversation" poll, conducted by Frank Luntz in partnership with the de Beaumont Foundation, Nov. 21-22, 2020. Learn more at [debeaumont.org/changing-the-covid-conversation](http://debeaumont.org/changing-the-covid-conversation).

### TIPS



#### FOCUS ON THE BENEFITS OF SUCCESS, NOT JUST THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE.

- We understand that people are tired, but public health measures are not the enemy — they are the roadmap for a faster and more sustainable recovery.
- Scientists and medical professionals are developing and preparing to distribute a safe and effective vaccine that will help us return to normal day-to-day activities.



#### EMPHASIZE THAT THE SCIENCE IS SETTLED.

- The science is clear. There is no doubt that mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing reduce the spread of COVID-19 and saves lives.



#### DON'T EXPECT PEOPLE TO TAKE PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES BECAUSE IT'S GOOD FOR THEM. SPEAK TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT TAKING THESE MEASURES.

- Because COVID-19 is highly infectious, one infection can quickly grow into an outbreak that could shutter a neighborhood, community, or entire city.



#### DON'T LET POLITICS OR PARTISANSHIP SLIP INTO YOUR MESSAGING, BECAUSE THAT WILL HARM YOUR CREDIBILITY. KEEP YOUR LANGUAGE NEUTRAL AND REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZE "EVERY" AND "ALL."

### Use These Words MORE:

### Use These Words LESS:

the pandemic

the coronavirus

eliminate/  
eradicate/  
get rid of  
the virus

defeat/crush/  
knock out the  
virus

social distancing

physical distancing

an effective and  
safe vaccine

a vaccine  
developed quickly

protocols

orders/  
imperatives/  
decrees

face masks

facial coverings

essential  
workers

frontline  
workers

personal  
responsibility

national duty

a stay-at-  
home order

a government  
lockdown/  
shutdown

public  
health  
agencies

government  
health  
agencies

policies that are  
based on facts/  
science/data

policies that  
are sensible/  
impactful/  
reasonable

## Sample Language

**SHORT:** We all have a responsibility to slow the spread of COVID-19. It is imperative that we protect each other by doing things like wearing masks and practicing social distancing so we can return to a strong economy and normal day-to-day activities.

**LONGER:** We all want a return to normal, and we all want the economy and our schools to open. And we also want to protect our family and friends from the pandemic.

Our finest medical researchers are clear: If we fail, there will be even worse consequences for our families and our economy.

We all have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of the pandemic and eliminate the virus as quickly as possible.

Therefore, it's imperative that we take an effective, fact-based approach ... by doing things like wearing face masks and practicing social distancing.

Let's do what needs to be done now so we can return to a strong economy and normal day-to-day activities.

