



Rapid Testing Message Brief

NOVEMBER 2020

METHODOLOGY

This Message Brief is based on online focus groups conducted with the following audiences:

Group 1: Frontline workers, Black, 22-45, urban and suburban areas

Group 2: Frontline workers, Latino, 22-45, urban and suburban areas

Group 3: Parents of school-aged kids, suburban, non-partisan

Group 4: Parents of school-aged kids, suburban and rural, Republicans

Participants in these groups were recruited from across the country, with more than half coming from states represented in STAT.

The objectives of these groups were to:

Measure awareness and knowledge of rapid testing

Explore motivations and barriers for participating in rapid testing

Identify motivating messages that encourage participation and support for rapid testing

Craft language to explain the role, mission, and value of STAT



ABOUT THIS MESSAGE BRIEF

This Brief includes a variety of research-based insights you can use to communicate more effectively about rapid testing, including:

Audience Insights that explain why people are motivated to adopt some Covid-19 related behaviors but hesitant to adopt others.

A **Message Formula** that articulates three key ideas that motivate people to support and participate in rapid testing.

Motivating Messages proven effective in focus groups.

Winning Words that give each message motivating power.

Unique Value Propositions that succinctly explain the benefits of rapid testing, as well as the role of STAT.

Tough Q&A to address concerns about rapid testing.



Audience Insights

People have a lot of information and enthusiasm—but not much confidence.

They embrace the value of testing and are desperate for it to work. But conflicting and overwhelming information has led many to throw their hands up.

“It’s a way to show your patriotism. it’s a way to bring people together and put people on the same page. We all don’t want the virus to spread and for our family members and loved ones anymore.” —*Frontline worker, Black*

“I read every news [article] about tests getting better or a vaccine getting closer. I read every alert that comes across my phone. The rapid test, that antigen tests, the PCR test...I still feel I don’t understand the mechanics of it...I sit there and I’m like, ‘I don’t understand how this works.’” —*Parent, nonpartisan*

People are paralyzed by indecision—and what the “right” thing to do is.

Two key barriers prevent action: Mixed messages on the value of different tests, and a scarcity mindset about test shortages.

“We got a [rapid] test for my daughter at the end of the summer. I called our pediatrician with the results. She said the results were completely worthless.” —*Parent, nonpartisan*

“People that need it are not getting the help that they should, because of people just taking up the tests...You shouldn’t be going out and getting tested if you don’t really have symptoms.” —*Frontline worker, Latino*

People are prepared for accuracy concerns. They just want to know what results mean for their behavior.

Rapid tests have intuitive appeal as a “contagiousness” test. But we have lots of catch-up work to do distinguishing contagious and symptomatic.

“If it’s accurate when it’s contagious, that’s what we need to know. I would be glad to know that it was positive or negative so that I could then take the precaution that I needed to prevent the spread.” —*Parent, nonpartisan*

“You said ‘if it’s contagious.’ So to me, I’m thinking if you are showing symptoms. So if I have a sore throat and diarrhea, to me that’s what rapid tests catch, but what if I have it and I’m not showing any symptoms, it doesn’t.” —*Parent, Republican*

Rapid Testing Message Formula

The **Message Formula** included in the original [Testing & Tracing Message Handbook](#) identified three key themes that make for the most motivating Covid-19 messages: *Do Your Part*, *Do It For Them*, *Before It's Too Late*.

Below, we've used insights from focus groups to demonstrate how to drive those same themes in messages about rapid testing.



DO YOUR PART

Show people their role in the strategy

People are craving a proactive strategy that relieves them of the burden of going it alone. But they need to see themselves in the system—and see a vision of how it would work.



DO IT FOR THEM

Give the audience a choice to protect others

People feel a responsibility to frontline workers. Giving them a choice to fulfill this responsibility is motivating—but framing it as a mandate feels like an obligation.



BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

Make speed personal

Fast results are motivating insofar as they can help people change their behavior and have peace of mind. Always tie the speed of the results to the actions that follow.



DO YOUR PART

Show people their role in the strategy

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MOTIVATING MESSAGE

If we produce enough rapid tests, people could take one at home in the morning, and they'd know if they had the virus before they stepped foot outside. With regular, rapid testing we can create an early warning system to stop outbreaks before they spread.

WINNING WORDS

“Take one at home in the morning”
“They'd know...before they stepped foot outside”

“Early warning system”
“Stop outbreaks before they spread”

WHY THEY WORK

Use vivid language to help people imagine what rapid testing could look like, and preview the emotional benefit of relief.

Use reassuring, confident language so that people understand how rapid testing could finally lead to the system they've been craving.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: QUOTES FROM FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENTS

“It feels like this is being as proactive as you can be. It still might spread a little bit, but you're getting it at the root of it almost.” —*Parent, Republican*

“We want it to be stopped before it spreads and creates more chaos.” —*Parent, nonpartisan*

“Whatever we can do to take action, right?”
—*Frontline worker, Latino*



DO IT FOR THEM

Give the audience a choice to protect others

People feel a responsibility to frontline workers. Giving them a choice to fulfill this responsibility is motivating—but framing it as a mandate feels like an obligation.

MOTIVATING MESSAGE

We owe it to our teachers, frontline workers, doctors, and nurses to make testing fast and effective. Rapid and regular testing is the best way to protect them—so they can keep protecting us.

WINNING WORDS

“We owe it”

“Protect them—so they can keep protecting us”

“Teachers, frontline workers, doctors and nurses”

WHY THEY WORK

Make testing a reciprocal relationship with those we’re protecting—not a bureaucratic obligation.

When describing people, use language that helps the audience imagine individual people.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: QUOTES FROM FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENTS

“When our teachers get sick, where are our children going to go? If all the police officers get sick, who’s going to come to your house for a burglary? When doctors get sick, the nurses get sick, who’s going to be there to take care of you?”

—Parent, Republican

“I give this message a ten, because I feel like there’s a choice in this one...[instead of] mandating schools and workplaces to test.” —Frontline worker, Latino



BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

Make speed personal

Fast results are motivating insofar as they can help people change their behavior and have peace of mind. Always tie the speed of the results to the actions that follow.

MOTIVATING MESSAGE

Most people don't get tested until they're sick. They have to wait days for results. In the meantime, they can spread the virus to others. With rapid testing, we can test people sooner—and get them the results before it's too late.

WINNING WORDS

“Wait days” “Sooner”
“In the meantime” “Before it's too late”

“Don't get tested until they're sick”
“Spread the virus to others”

WHY THEY WORK

Use language about time passing to remind people they're on the clock.

Remind people what's to be lost by neglecting rapid testing—so that participating becomes the default option, rather than an extra effort.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: QUOTES FROM FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENTS

“I think the words about time—‘rapid,’ ‘meantime,’ ‘too late’—those stand out. And ‘waiting days’ because we're trying to decrease the amount of time that people are contagious.”
—Parent, Republican

“Just the word ‘sooner.’ Sooner is convenience...[a rapid test] lets us know and without the anxiety of waiting.”
—Frontline worker, Latino

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:

Rapid Testing's Unique Value Proposition

The following **Unique Value Proposition** is a succinct statement that describes the benefits of rapid testing that other tests cannot offer. This statement can be used to introduce the topic and answer common questions.

RAPID TESTING VALUE PROPOSITION



With regular, rapid testing we can create an early warning system to stop outbreaks before they spread.



It's the only way we'll be able to reopen schools, workplaces, and other public settings while protecting the frontline workers who have spent months protecting us.



Rapid tests provide results in 15 minutes, so people can protect those around them before it's too late—instead of spending days worrying if their loved ones are at risk.

STAT'S Unique Value Proposition

Throughout our focus groups, we explored the most motivating way to describe STAT's mission, role in the Covid-19 response, and value delivered.

If we're going to end this pandemic, we have to work together. That's why Governors in both parties are joining an alliance to deploy rapid tests where they're needed most. Together, they're creating an early warning system to stop outbreaks before they spread.

WINNING WORDS		WHY THEY WORK
"We have to work together"	"Together"	Americans see cooperation as the only way we'll beat Covid—and the most important thing we've been missing. Use language that emphasizes action and collaboration.
"Both parties"	"Joining an alliance"	
"Deploy rapid tests"	"Stop outbreaks before they spread"	Emphasize how cooperation leads to a system and strategy—not just the number of dollars spent.
"Early warning system"		

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: QUOTES FROM FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENTS

"The fact that we're coming together in an alliance to fight that thing just shows we're working together. This is the only way that we're going to end this thing." —*Frontline worker, Black*

"It's [above] political issues...Democrat versus Republican? In this matter, it's safety. So it's thumbs up for me if something like this has happened." —*Parent, nonpartisan*

"'Work together' stands out. We've just got to do that. That's the only way we're going to get through this." —*Parent, nonpartisan*

"'Deploy,' that sounds like we're going to really fight and get things... like we're going to get this... we're serious about getting this." —*Parent, Rural*

"I know like Florida was a huge outbreak and you know, the state went on shutdown, but yeah, I think it's, I think if we just knew a little bit earlier, a little bit faster than we could prevent outbreaks." —*Frontline worker, Latino*

Tough Q&A

We've used the insights in this brief to answer common questions about rapid testing. This section will be expanded over time.

Don't rapid tests return too many false negatives to be useful?

Rapid tests are very accurate at detecting the virus when people have enough of it to be contagious—whether they have symptoms or not. And, because the results are so quick, people know if they're contagious in time to immediately adjust their behavior and protect those around them.

Rapid tests may not detect the virus if you've just been exposed and aren't contagious yet. That's why rapid testing shouldn't be used as a one-off test. They're designed to be used regularly, so you catch the virus as soon as a person becomes contagious.

The accuracy ranges for these tests are also within the acceptable ranges for Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA.

Nevada almost halted the use of rapid antigen tests in nursing homes—pointing to false positives. Why should other states rely on them?

Nevada has since reversed that decision, and are resuming use of rapid tests in nursing homes. And it's vital that they, and every other state, continue to do so.

Four out of every 10 people who have died from Covid-related causes in the U.S. have been nursing home residents. We must protect residents and their families, and that means stopping the virus from getting through the doors.

Since July, Covid cases and deaths in nursing homes have plummeted by 40 percent thanks to frequent testing. If we let up on testing, we'll lose the progress we've made. In fact, the Nevada sample is evidence of this success: It included 16 confirmed cases of Covid-19. Each one of those cases could have started an outbreak that would have devastated an entire nursing home.

Every test has false positives. In fact, PCR tests would almost certainly produce even more false positives in Nevada nursing homes, because they would detect minuscule fragments of the disease when a person isn't actually contagious anymore.

Rapid tests continue to be an extremely valuable tool for detecting Covid-19, especially in high prevalence areas.

Can rapid screening tests replace mask wearing and social distancing?

Rapid testing creates an early warning system to spot an outbreak—but we still have to keep our defenses up. The test is just the messenger, and it's up to us to do our part by socially distancing, wearing a mask, and washing our hands.

A negative result also isn't a blank check. A person could be exposed to the virus in the morning and test negative at lunch time because they're not contagious yet. But by dinner time, they could infect an entire group of people. The test would catch it the next day, but by that point it'd be too late. That's why it's so important to socially distance, wear a mask, and wash our hands, even if we've just gotten a negative test.

We also don't know how immune a person is from reinfection if they've had Covid-19 already. That's why it's always important to wear a mask, socially distance, and wash your hands--even if you've had Covid-19 before and have just received a negative test result.

Which is better—rapid tests or PCR tests?

One test isn't "better" than the other. They're just designed for different purposes. And we need both to stop the spread of the virus.

The advantages of rapid tests is that they're very accurate at catching the virus when someone has enough of it to be contagious, and they give results in as little as 15 minutes. They can be conducted anywhere and are cheap enough that they can be used almost daily. Because of these strengths, they're ideal for the frontlines of the pandemic, and to help open schools, workplaces and other public settings. Because they can be used so frequently, they help spot someone who is contagious, and stop an outbreak before it's too late.

PCR tests are more likely to catch an infection even if someone has such a tiny amount of the virus in their system that they're not contagious. But they also take a few days to get results, so they can't be used for screening on the frontlines. But PCR tests are important to confirm a rapid test to make sure a person who tested positive actually needs to keep isolating. PCR tests are also helpful in a clinical setting, where a physician needs to be completely sure whether a person has Covid-19, influenza or something else, so they can treat them appropriately.



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