

Microscopy AND Microanalysis

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Calendar of Meetings and Courses



Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

Increasingly there are non-native speakers around the labs, and I am having a terrible time communicating with them. I've tried talking very loud and very slowly, but I can't seem to get them to understand me.

Hoarse in Hamburg

Dear Hoarse,

Ach du meine Güte! Of course volume and deliberate enunciation are ineffectual! You must also include exaggerated gestures and pantomime to ensure your message is conveyed. However, care must be taken as some gestures may be misinterpreted. Some of my colleagues hired an interpreter and wondered why the lab mates were laughing at inappropriate moments. One never knows what the interpreter is really saying, now does one? Having a resident Lab Mime can help but may lead to emotional instability in some individuals. I myself finally snapped during a lab meeting and had to be subdued after attacking our Lab Mime with the laser pointer. That should wipe that smirk off his smug, painted face!

Dear Abbe,

Lately I've been getting odd requests from technicians sent over by their PI. Just the other day someone came in asking for "solid nitrogen." I asked if he meant liquid, but he insisted it should be solid. How do I delicately inform people like this about the impossibility of their request?

Worried in Wyoming

Dear Worry-wort,

Ach du leibe Zeit! Why do you torment me with such trivial matters? Technicians and post-docs are rarely worried about the impossibility of their requests. Just invite the technician for a few drinks in the break room. Mix him a "John Mansfield" and hand him a dewar of LN₂. Inform him that he can easily make it solid by applying a vacuum. This should be done, you will explain, by vigorously sucking on the opening to produce a vacuum and thus the solid state. I used this ruse once on my nemesis and long-time optics competitor, Joe Fraunhofer. It was soon after this that he became employed at Benediktbeuern—something about a new technique in "glass blowing." The stinker never did reveal his secrets. Ah, if only we could reproduce that glass!

Ask Herr Abbe your burning questions at jpshield@uga.edu.