



Boston University's Guide to Reddit AMAs

So, you're thinking about hosting a Reddit AMA? Here's what you need to know:

But first, what is a Reddit AMA?

Reddit, a massive online community home to user-led discussions on every topic imaginable, bills itself as “the front page of the internet.” The site gets over 330 million unique visitors per month. Reddit AMAs (which stands for “Ask Me Anything”) — whether they're timed around the news cycle or simply focused on a topic of great general interest — are Q&As designed to bring an authority on a subject to a community of interested people. It's an organic, engaging, and fun way to increase awareness of your work, your research, and Boston University.

What's the value in participating?

On a basic level, the value of an AMA is the connection you make with people interested in your topic of expertise. You're able to share your invaluable first-hand knowledge and experience with the Reddit community, and highlight your research in front of large audiences (Professor Andy Andres' AMA for BU reached 82,000 people). Professors who have hosted AMAs have also reported a corresponding uptick in media interest: reporters often use Reddit to source experts, and AMAs are easily discoverable on search engines, too. Additionally, professors' participation is valued by BU leadership. Each AMA gets featured in the following day's Executive News Briefing, which is sent to the President, Deans, department chairs, and more.

A few things to keep in mind if you decide to host one:

1. What topic should I discuss?

Topics centered around the news cycle, seasonality (such as a dietitian answering questions about how best to keep your health-centric New Year's resolutions at the beginning of January) or of general interest to a Reddit audience (read: informed, and on the geeky side) are your best bets. If you're particularly interested in something currently happening in the world that relates to your specialty, it's a good indicator that it is the right time for an AMA. There are bound to be tons of people on Reddit interested, too, and they have questions for an expert like you!

2. What subreddit should I host my AMA on?

We recommend the following subreddit: [r/IAmA](#): I Am A, where the mundane becomes fascinating and the outrageous suddenly seems normal.” This thread has over 19 million subscribers, and is the number one place on Reddit for AMAs. You can have an



AMA on a smaller subreddit — for example, r/science or r/movies — but you’re more likely to receive a higher volume of questions on the IAmA subreddit. Plus, if you host on there, you can cross-promote it on other subreddits (more on that later).

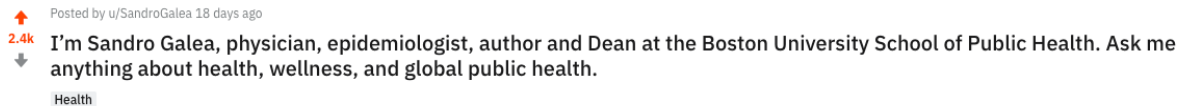
3. When should I host my AMA?

It’s really up to you. We’d recommend choosing a day mid-week (historically, Thursday’s tend to drive the most traffic), and starting in the afternoon (we recommend around 12:00 p.m. ET). *Make sure you have **2.5 hours** minimum blocked out for the AMA!*

4. How do I get started?

First things first: you need to make a Reddit account if you don’t already have one. We recommend picking a username that incorporates your name. Then, sitting down and creating a title for your AMA, a bio, and your “proof” photo are your next steps. Please see the attached screenshots for reference on what that should look like (below). Your title should be explanatory, catchy and clearly allude to your expertise and the topic of your AMA.

Example title:



Your bio should expand upon your expertise, and explain “why” you’re doing the AMA — for example: is it timed around a particular news event? Is it because you’re an Alzheimer’s researcher and it’s National Alzheimer’s Awareness Month? Your intro should incorporate the phrase “ask me anything.”

Example title: I’m Sandro Galea, physician, epidemiologist, author and Dean at the Boston University School of Public Health. Ask me anything about health, wellness, and global public health.

Example bio:

I have been named an “epidemiology innovator” by *TIME* and one of the “World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds” by *Thomson Reuters*. After serving as a field physician for Doctors Without Borders where I witnessed case after case of preventable diseases and injuries first-hand, I realized our national understanding of what constitutes “being well” is wrong. Currently, we focus on



the lifestyles we adopt to stay healthy, and the insurance plans and medicine we rely on when we're not. While all these things are important, they have not proven to be the difference between being healthy and unhealthy. I am here to discuss what we should really think about when we discuss health and wellness on an individual, national and global scale.

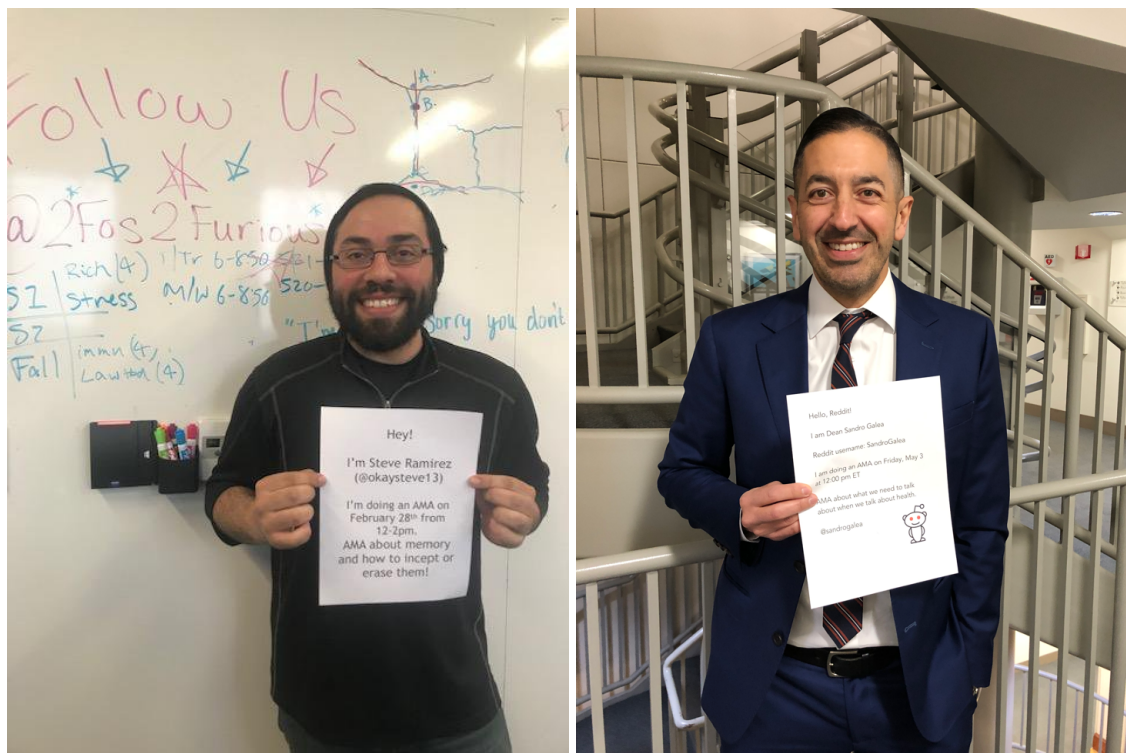
Ask me anything about:

- What is wellness?
- How should we think about wellness in our own lives and in our communities?
- What is the United States getting wrong about health, wellness, and healthcare? What could the government be doing differently? What could individuals do differently?
- Why people in the U.S., despite spending more on health than any other country, remain less healthy and live shorter lives than people in other rich nations.
- How current events such as gun law reform, immigration, environmental deregulation, the implications of tax reform, welfare and entitlement programs, intersect and impact health. How U.S. history, wealth, politics, and power contributes to today's healthcare crisis.

I have held academic positions at Columbia University, University of Michigan, and the New York Academy of Medicine. I am an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine, and chair of the board of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health. Previously, I was president of the Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER) and of the Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science (IAPHS). I also discuss how health is tied to current conversations in *Fortune Magazine*.

Lastly, your proof photo — a picture of you holding a sign that lists your Reddit username, and the date and time of your AMA — needs to be either 1) submitted with your [calendar request](#) or 2) tweeted out from your Twitter account. You have to link to either the tweet itself that you sent out with the image in the “proof” section.

Two examples of “proof” photos:



5. How do I promote it?

Tweeting your AMA “proof” picture and then getting in touch with the PR office here at BU to retweet it from Boston University’s main accounts is a great place to start. In addition, you can “crosspost” it on other subreddits. That means you can post the link to your r/IAMA thread with a brief description of what it’s about in r/science if it’s about science, or r/movies if it’s about movies. Get creative. What communities do you think would be most interested in your area of expertise? There’s probably a subreddit dedicated just to that.

Another avenue for promotion is spreading the word internally throughout your BU community (whether that’s your school or college via newsletters or on the [BU event calendar](#) ahead of time, or by having your school’s social media team post about it on your school’s social media channels after you have posted the AMA thread and gotten it going). Additionally, you should tweet out the link to your AMA on your own Twitter account as soon as you can after it is “live.” This way, your followers can easily click the link if they see it on Twitter, and go directly to your Q&A.

Finally, reach out to the organizations, associations and publications the faculty member is affiliated with, asking them to help promote the discussion ahead of time and once the



AMA goes live. This will help attract relevant, informed and engaging individuals to the conversation.

Two examples of Twitter promotion:



If you want, you can schedule your AMA on the [r/IAmA calendar](#) (this is not required, but we advise it if possible). 30 minutes before your AMA is scheduled to go live, post your information on the r/IAmA thread.

6. It's go time!

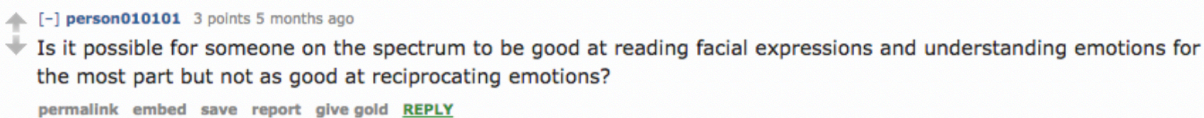
BU PR or the I/AmA moderators you submitted a calendar invitation to will send a hyperlink to click to launch your discussion. 30 minutes before the conversation is scheduled to begin, click on the hyperlink, double check that your title, bio and proof picture are complete and accurate, and hit submit! If you did not make a calendar request, you can also launch your AMA [through this link](#).

Please allow 2.5 hours of your schedule that day for the AMA. Launching the AMA thread, sharing the live link over social media, and waiting for the first few questions to roll in accounts for the first half hour of this 2.5 hour window. Then, you must be available to answer questions for approximately 2 hours after that. You can 1) stop answering questions at the end of the 2-hour mark from your official start time, 2) you can answer them for longer, or 3) take a break and keep answering them later on at

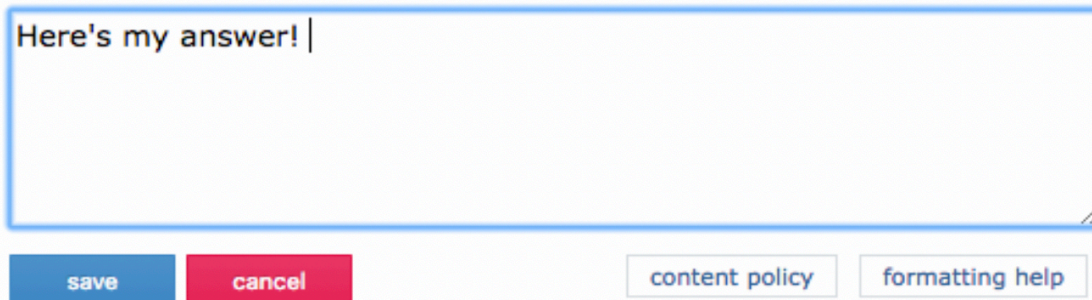


your leisure. It's a good idea to check in on your AMA several hours after the stated end time, because there might be a surge of questions later on you may be interested in answering as well.

Questions can start filing in as soon as you create the AMA thread on the r/IAmA subreddit. Here's what a question looks like on a Reddit AMA:



To answer a user's question, you hit the **REPLY** button next to it, and simply type your response. Then, hit save.



If you decide to finish the AMA, you can edit your short bio at the top and write something along these lines:

** Thank you everyone for writing in – this has been a wonderful conversation! I will try to come back and address any questions that I did not get to today, but I have to log off for now. In the meantime, for more on my public health perspectives follow me on Twitter at @sandrogalea or take a look at sandrogalea.org

7. Any Reddit oddities I should be aware of before I do this?

Yes, Reddit can be a strange place, so it's a good idea to prepare yourself for a wide variety of questions! A popular fun one: "Cake or pie?" Feel free to let them know which tasty treat you prefer. However, you might come across some not-so-fun questions: ones that are inappropriate, or ones that make you uncomfortable. Please know that you may ignore those. Some questions are better left unanswered!

Additionally, please remember that folks who ask questions often have follow-ups, so it's worth checking back on already-answered questions from time to time to see if they have another query or didn't feel they got enough information.



Lastly, you may find it is easiest to “sort” the comments/questions on your AMA by “new,” so you can see the newest questions at the top of the page as they come in. Otherwise, they are sorted by “best,” which means most “upvoted.” We have found this is effective in seeing every single question and keeps you from having to scroll down through the page over and over. Example:

SORT BY **NEW** ▼

Good luck, and happy Reddit-ing!

Reddit AMA Checklist:

Ahead of time:

- Create Reddit account if you don’t already have one: <https://www.reddit.com/>
- Write your AMA title
- Draft description/short bio explaining who you are and what your AMA is about
- Submit your AMA to the r/IAMA calendar: <https://www.cognitofirms.com/IAMA/IAMACalendarRequest>
- Create and submit proof (BU PR recommends submitting proof through r/IAMA calendar. You can also copy and paste a tweet from your account with your proof picture into your bio once you launch the live AMA)
- Add in link to proof in your description/short bio (see instructions above)
- Contact school/college marketing team and Boston University central PR about the AMA for promotion purposes. Ask if they will promote it on their social channels, newsletters, websites, etc. beforehand (and also at the time of the actual event). Also reach out to the organizations, associations and publications the participant is affiliated with for additional promotion.

Day of:

- Submit AMA on r/IAMA 30 minutes before your scheduled time: [https://www.reddit.com/r/iama/submit?sidebar&selftext=true&title=IamA%20\(Blank\)%20AMA!&text=**My+short+bio:**+Enter+stuff+here%0D%0A%0D**My+Proof:**+Enter+link+here](https://www.reddit.com/r/iama/submit?sidebar&selftext=true&title=IamA%20(Blank)%20AMA!&text=**My+short+bio:**+Enter+stuff+here%0D%0A%0D**My+Proof:**+Enter+link+here)
- Tweet out the link to your AMA from your personal Twitter handle. Also, if you’re active on other channels, post the AMA on your Facebook or on your LinkedIn



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- Email the link for your AMA to your school/college and other organizations who are interested in promoting the discussion and have them share it from their social channels (as well as central PR)
- Begin your AMA at the designated time
- Answer questions from Reddit users by hitting REPLY and then SAVE
- Add a note in your short bio signing off when you're done. Thank people for joining and asking questions. You can also leave a link to your social media channels for folks who would like to follow you.

After:

- Double check the following day to see if you missed any questions or follow-up on questions you already answered.