



Tips for Writing About Research for General Audiences

1. Put your audience first

- If you can, figure out who you will reach directly or might reach indirectly. If you truly don't know, assume average scientific knowledge, interest, and familiarity with terms.
- Do you want them to think something is interesting and share it?
- Do you want them to use it to inform public policy or clinical care on a certain topic?

2. Pick your jargon wisely

- You don't have to include every technical term related to the topic – just the ones you can't avoid.
- If you use a piece of jargon, immediately explain it.
- Titles, names of centers, and funding details should go into later paragraphs.

3. Purge passive voice

- Avoid is, was, were, be, are, will be, and any sentence construction where the action happens to something or someone, instead of someone or something taking an action or causing a consequence.
- Even if it makes a sentence longer to make the verb active, do it.

4. Shorten your sentences

- Prune them into lean, mean fighting machines and vary sentence length.
- Readers hear the writing in their minds as if someone was reading it out loud. Too-long sentences will lose them.

5. Write an opening that will compel someone to keep reading

6. Don't just re-tell things step by step

- Find a narrative – about how the topic ties to recent events, about the question or problem at hand, about the obstacles and challenges in the way, about context and controversies in the field, or about the people involved.

7. Tap into your joy and creativity

- Take the time to make the story come alive through analogies, metaphors, and vivid quotes.

8. Ruthlessly edit your own writing

- Better yet, have someone else read/edit it.

9. Keep the length down

- Use visuals to help reduce words.

10. Don't let colleagues “recomplexify” the story when reviewing

- Emphasize that you need to engage a general audience