

Scientific Communication Writing Assignment

Objective:

The importance of communicating scientific information to a variety of audiences is crucially important in today's world. Presentation of this information can take on a variety of forms from primary and secondary peer reviewed literature to a story on your local news. When presenting scientific information, it is imperative to consider your target audience and present your information in a way that is easily understood by them. In order to gain experience reading about scientific information and communicating it to a lay audience, you will research and present information on a topic of your choice in the form of a news article. Please take some time to look at [Sciencedaily.com](https://www.sciencedaily.com) for some examples of these types of articles.

Description:

Each student will identify a biological topic of interest to them to utilize as the source of information for their news article. Students should choose a topic they are curious or passionate about – this will make completing this assignment more interesting! You may already have a topic in mind based on your personal interests or experiences; if not, biology-related topics can be found everywhere: in the news, on podcasts, in documentaries, in science journals and magazines, etc. Your source of information must discuss a biological topic.

After you have identified one (or two sources) of information about your topic, you will:

- Write a 2-page news article-style paper discussing your topic of interest.
- Format your paper in the following way: double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins.
- On a separate page of the same document, you must include:
 - at least two properly cited references (information on citation styles in biology can be found on the Moodle site, just below the writing assignment link);
 - a link to your primary source, if available;
 - a 2-4 sentence paragraph explaining why you chose this topic.
- Save your paper as a pdf; papers must be uploaded to Moodle as pdf documents.
- If a link to your primary source is not available, then in addition to your paper you must also upload a pdf of your primary source to Moodle.

When writing your news article please keep the following things in mind:

- Your news article should not simply paraphrase the original source(s); be sure to explain why this topic is interesting, the biology associated with the topic, what we know and don't yet know about the topic, and how understanding the biology associated with your topic helps us understand larger issues or concepts.
- Your target audience is the general public (such as another student in this course), so be sure to relay the information you are communicating in a way that is accessible.
- Direct quotes are not used in scientific writing, so be sure to put all concepts and thoughts into your own words and cite the source of the information.

This assignment will be worth 100 points in total, divided among the different assignments outlined below. Please keep in mind that you should not (knowingly) utilize the same source as another student, and that you may **not** submit a paper that you have written for another course.

Assignment 1: Draft (15 points; full credit awarded if all materials are submitted on time)

Due: Sunday, October 23rd, 11:59 pm

Once you have identified your topic and your sources of information, write a 2-page news article that describes your topic of interest to a general audience. Your paper should explain the science in a way that makes it clear that you understand the biological principles associated with your topic of interest as well as what we know and don't know about this topic. Be sure to provide appropriate background information and clearly define any scientific terms that you use. If possible, try to avoid scientific jargon and provide examples and analogies when appropriate.

In order to provide an opportunity for you to receive feedback on your assignment before final grading by the instructors, your paper draft will be distributed to other members of the class for review.

Checklist:

On Moodle, upload:

- a single pdf document containing:
 - your 2-page draft;
 - a 3rd page with references, a link to your primary source, and a short paragraph explaining why you chose your topic.
- If a link to your primary source is not available, then in addition to your paper you must also upload a pdf of your primary source to Moodle.

Assignment 2: Draft Evaluations (10 points, 5 per evaluation)

Due: Sunday, November 13th, 11:59 pm

Using the rubric provided on Moodle, you will review the news articles of two other students and provide constructive and valuable feedback. In your feedback you should include things that you liked as well as things that you feel could be improved upon while also including suggestions on how to improve them.

Checklist:

On Moodle, upload:

- two separate pdfs, each containing one of your evaluations of the two news articles you reviewed.

Assignment 3: Final Paper (75 points)

Due: Sunday, December 4th, 11:59 pm

Using the feedback from the peers who reviewed your draft, you will revise your news article before submitting it for final grading. Your final submission will be evaluated by the instructors based on content, spelling and grammar, proper citations, flow, and appropriateness for the audience. Please review the rubric posted on Moodle.

Checklist:

On Moodle, upload:

- a single pdf containing:
 - your 2-page revised final paper
 - a 3rd page with references, a link to your primary source, and a short paragraph explaining why you chose your topic.
- If a link to your primary source is not available, then in addition to your paper you must also upload a pdf of your primary source to Moodle.