

Scientific Communication Writing Assignment Rubric – Peer Evaluation

your name: Serena Xu

assignment reviewed: 77

Using the rubric below, please evaluate each of your assigned news articles in each of the areas shown, filling out a separate evaluation form for each news article. Please highlight the part of the rubric text that explains why you chose a specific assessment category. In the “General Feedback” section at the bottom of this form, please include more specific feedback, including things that you liked as well as things that you feel could be improved upon and suggestions on how to improve them.

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
Content: Does the news article convey the writer’s understanding of a biological topic?	The news article introduces a biological topic and clearly illustrates the writer’s understanding of the topic including what is known and not known about it and how understanding the biology associated with the topic helps us understand larger issues or concepts.	The news article introduces a biological topic and presents information about it, but the topic is not explained clearly or doesn’t distinguish between what is known vs. what is not known or doesn’t explain how understanding the biology associated with the topic helps us understand larger issues or concepts.	The news article does not illustrate the writers understanding of the topic and does not indicate what is known vs. what is not known or how understanding the biology associated with the topic helps us understand larger issues or concepts.
Audience: Is the writing appropriate for the target audience?	The news article avoids jargon and clearly defines terms and ideas for a non-expert audience.	The news article defines or explains some terms, but some key terms or ideas would be challenging for a non-expert audience.	The news article lacks definitions and explanations, making the topic inaccessible to a non-expert audience.
Organization: Is the news article clearly organized?	The news article is well organized and easy to follow with good transitions between the paragraphs.	The news article is generally organized and easy to follow but conceptual connections aren’t always clear.	The news article is disorganized, and the information presented doesn’t flow well.

Rubric continues on next page

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
Format, spelling & grammar: Does the news article follow the recommended format and is it free of writing errors?	The news article follows guidelines for paper length and format and has been carefully proofread for spelling and grammatical mistakes.	The news article is outside the recommended length or does not conform to the formatting guidelines; the news article contains a small number of spelling and/or grammatical errors.	The news article is significantly outside the recommended length and does not conform to the formatting guidelines; the news article contains numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors.
Citations: Are the citations presented appropriately?	The news article contains appropriate in-text citations and a list of references for all source material.	The news article is missing either appropriate in-text citations or a list of references.	The news article is missing appropriate in-text citations and a list of references OR citations are missing for one or more sources.
Rationale for choosing topic: Did the writer indicate why they chose the topic?	The rationale for choosing the topic is clearly explained.		No rationale for the topic's choice is provided.

General feedback (5 points):

Advantages:

- The author has presented a biological phenomenon, Sexual Size Dimorphism (SSD), which might be originally unaware by the general public including myself. SSD is prevalent among organisms, and the general public might have been accepting it as a normal phenomenon. Although this phenomenon might seem prevalent among organisms, it deserves pondering. The topic presented by the author is meaningful that it brings the audience on an investigation on the potential reasons/causes of SSD, with an emphasis on female SSD.
- The author provides sufficient background knowledge about SSD, male/female SSD, and the animal species that are affected by SSD. As I mentioned before, to the general public, SSD might be a novel biological terminology. A sufficient introduction of background knowledge about SSD allows us to get an elementary level of understanding of this biological phenomenon and further engage in the rest of the discussion of the article.
- The author is very clear about the known aspect of SSD, that is, its morphism pattern among affected animals. The author also clearly identified the unknown aspect of the topic in question, that is, the primary cause of female SSD. This allows the reader to follow the logic and structure of the article without having to ponder about the main topic of interest of the article.

- The author clearly states the importance of this article, such that even though as non-scientists, the general public should care about the topic being discussed, (as it concerns the invention of precision medicine). Also, I like how the author is very precise and critical about the areas of improvements of the current existing studies on SSD, for example, the exclusivity on selection of study subjects, which neglects using female and youth subjects. That is very helpful for me to understand the fact that these current studies focus on exclusively male subjects even though female SSD is much more prevalent than male SSD across animal species.

Areas of improvement and potential suggested improvements:

- Although the author is very clear about the main topic being delivered in this article, it would be good if they could give a title to this news article. This way, it would catch the audience's attention on reading this article and provokes their interest on this topic.
- In the second paragraph where the author addressed that the potential triggering factor of female SSD, they mentioned that it might be due to the female animals need to breed and raise their offspring (Nodelman 1-2). This seems a little abrupt because it does not explain the connection between this potential factor and female SSD. The hypothesis being presented there is a major part of this article, so a clear explanation of its relevance to the topic of interest is crucial.
- It would be easier for the audience to comprehend the article and get our understanding flow with the article if the author could further explain some of the biological terminologies. For example, "selection pressures" (Nodelman 1), "ecological niches" (Nodelman 2). Without understanding these terminologies, I found it hard to understand the connection between these terms and the mechanism of female SSD. As the reader, I am confused as to how male mating pattern is related to selective pressure and the increased size in female animal.
- It would be good if the author could present analysis of the pieces of information that they paraphrase. For example, in the paragraph where the author examines the flaws of the current studies on SSD, they mentioned that the scientists have been neglecting to use youth animals as study project. They solely paraphrased this information without informing the readers why it is important to use youth animals in those studies, as the main focus of this article is about female SSD, not necessary the age of organism being studies. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to address the relevance of age selection of study subjects and the benefits this might bring to the study of female SSD.
- Although the author is very clear about the importance of the topic of their article and the areas of improvement of the current studies on SSD, they mentioned those in several places in the article, which seems a little repetitive and here and there. It might be good to reorganize the importance of the topic that was in the last sentence of the last paragraph of the article into the introduction paragraph so it can engage the readers to proceed reading the article. Then, the author could integrate the advice of further research that is currently in their introductory paragraph into the conclusion paragraph where they suggest the overall fields of improvements of the studies of SSD.

Overall assessment (excellent, good, needs improvement): Excellent. The author has brought a meaningful topic of female SSD that might have been long-neglected by the general public and engage us to explore the cause behind this biological phenomenon. The author is very thoughtful at providing us with relevant background information about this phenomenon. Most importantly, the author is well-aware about the importance of this topic and has a clear critical thinking about the flaws of the current studies on female SSD. As long as the author could provide more information about the biological terminologies as described above and rearrange the structure (importance/improvements of this topic), the readers' understanding on this topic would flow even more fluently and more engaged throughout the course of this article.