

How to explain *real science to regular people?*

You have made an important discovery in your lab and are preparing your manuscript for submission to a well-regarded journal. You hope for acceptance, affirmation, and accolades from your colleagues. But how will the rest of the world learn about your valuable research? Why should a university or foundation or investors continue funding your research? Can you explain your findings to them? Can you explain to family and friends? How can you explain your research to a non-researcher?

While scientific journals focus on objective interpretation and critique of the data, the **goal** in explaining **real science to regular people** is to promote your research and educate the public. This requires an interesting and easily understood article similar to one you might find in a blog or on your newsfeed.

Tips to bring your research findings to the general public:

1. Focus on telling a compelling story.
2. Use language that is accessible to the average person.
3. Represent the science fairly.

To grab people's attention about *real science*, you have to write about *real people* – the people who discovered the science and the people that will be impacted by this discovery.

Write the article

- Craft an eye-catching, attention-grabbing title.
- Make a first impression. Let them know why they should read your article by beginning in an intriguing way that draws your reader into wanting to know more.
- Be concise. Answer the big questions sufficiently to create a solid understanding, but omit irrelevant details.
- Be direct. Avoid jargon or overly complicated terminology. Simplify the concepts without talking down to your readers.
- Don't compromise the science but describe it accurately and succinctly. Stats are important, but share them in a way that is relevant and impactful.
- Include pictures. These may be pictures of special lab equipment or animals used in your research. You could include a colorful data chart or graph that summarizes the major results.
- Provide a satisfying conclusion. Explain how your research fits with the bigger picture, and why the reader needs to know this information. Return them to the "hook" that you used to capture their attention initially.

Write a hook

How can you translate your research into an article that will catch someone's attention? The style of writing required for a peer reviewed journal differs dramatically from the style of writing needed to engage the average reader. People like stories, so create a narrative that draws in the reader. Options:

- Provide a behind-the-scenes look at the people involved in the project. What is your story? How did you get to this discovery? Tell the personal side of your research.
- Highlight the impact of your study. How will the reader be affected? What does your research mean for science?
- Present your research as a mystery or controversy. You are a scientific detective who has been digging for clues to resolve a burning scientific question.

Resources

Anderson, Francis T. [Science Journalism: Writing a General Audience Article](#). Intersect Job Simulations
Burke, Katie L. [12 Tips for Scientists Writing for the General Public](#). American Scientist. July, 31, 2015.
ScienceEditor. [Describing Real Science to Regular People](#). Servicescape. Sept, 23, 2019.