

# Talking About Science

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# Science Writing: **What?**

- Science vs. health (at NIH, all science writing is health writing)
- Writing about science is not technical writing
  - Re-enact discovery
- Passion sells: Love your topic

# Science Writing: **Why?**

- Science and technology very important in modern life
- Most people don't know/admit that science is something they should care about
  - Interest in science is usually linked to personal need
  - Safe to assume readers know less than you think they do

# Science Writing: **Who?**

- Who writes vs. **who reads**
- Accurately addressing your audience is most critical piece of effective writing
- Audience is not “everyone” (Judith Viorst)
  - Beware of sources: Reviewing for accuracy vs. rewriting your story

# Science Writing: **Who?**

- It is okay to write for different audiences...

# Audience

*“The earliest visible change in the gross behavior began to occur 3 hours after papain, and consisted of drooping and flexibility of the ear tips.”*

- Lewis Thomas,  
biologist

*“We noted that the rabbits, for all their display of good health, looked different and funny.”*

- Lewis Thomas,  
writer

# Different writing products

Features



Fun language, humor

Books and brochures, patient education



Teaching, advancing public health

Newsletters, Web



Every word counts

Talking points



Different voices, messages

Captions, puzzles



Connecting info

News releases



Template-driven

Meeting reports



Capturing essence

# Science Writing: **How?**

- Many effective strategies
- Research (do not let it become recreation)
- Follow the world around you, stay current
- **READ** constantly
  - “Word fishing” helps you develop a relationship with a topic and what non-scientists know about it

# (Science) Writing: **When, Where?**

- Many different styles
- Set goals and timelines and stick to them
- Do it now
- “Write” anywhere (jot down thoughts on scraps of paper, PDA, etc)
  - Get a jump start: write 1-2 sentences at day’s end, name the document. Now you have a “draft” vs. empty page next day