Science writing and communication careers

What does a Career in Science Writing and Communication look like?

Working in science communication encompasses a variety of careers, from traditional journalism, working for scientific journals (i.e. Nature, Science, Cell) to public outreach. Careers exist for general interest scientific publications (i.e. Scientific American, National Geographic), Universities, Federal agencies (NIH, NASA), or even textbook writing. Effective science communication is critical to having a positive impact on the way science is viewed by the public [1]. A PhD is valued in many of these careers. Read more [2] about this from Robert Irion of the University of California, Santa Cruz's Science Communication Program.

The type of career that is right for you will be related to the audience you want to reach. For example, do you want your audience to be the public, doctors or those in the medical field [3], scientific researchers, or investors for biotech companies? You will also want to consider the format of your communication. For more information, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has resources on Science Communication and Journalism [4].

Want to know more about Science Writing? Check out this book [5] or even this one [6]. Sciencemag writer Jim Austin shares some resources for those interested in Science Writing and editing here [7] or you can visit this Duke University page to learn more about careers in academic publishing [8].


What are some job titles to search related to Science Writing and Communication?
• Advisory or Associate Editor
• Communications Director
• Communications Specialist
• Copy-Editor
• Editor-in-Chief
• Editorial Assistant
• Editorial Board Member
• Freelance Science Journalist
• Managing Editor
• Medical Affairs Manager
• Medical Affairs Publications Manager
• Medical Writer
• Outreach Scientist
• Public Information Officer at a University or College
• Public Relations Counselor
• Research Analyst
• Scientific Advisor (to a law firm or venture capital firm)
• Science Communicator
• Science Editor
• Science Feature Writer
• Science Journalist/Book Author
• Science News Editor
• Science Outreach Program Manager
• Science Writer
• Scientific Communications and Writing (Public Relations)
• Social Media Manager
• Technical Editor

Get experience and build a portfolio

There are many ways to get scientific writing and communication experience. Some examples include:

• Postdocs: Participate in the Postdoc slam [15]
  • Grad students sign up for next year's Grad Slam [16]
• Get involved with a student-run publication (e.g. Synapse)
• Perform a real job task in freelance science journalism, journal editing, or medical writing through a job simulation [17]
• Create and blog and use it (e.g. science media)
• Write for a local news outlet
• Submit an article to a Scientific Journal [18] such as the American Society for Microbiology's Science Communication issue or MyScienceWork.com [19]
• Go to a conference such as the World Conference of Science Journalists [20]
• Advocate for Science [21]: A How-to from the National Postdoc Association
• How to create your portfolio [22]*
• Attend a workshop*
  • Santa Fe Science Writing Workshop [23]
  • ComSciCon [24]
- Apply for an internship* or fellowship*
  - Campus news office
  - American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Mass Media Fellowship [27]
  - AAAS Minority Science Writers Internship [28]
  - National Association of Science Writers (NASW) Diversity Fellowship [29]
  - Science Writing Internship at Cell Press [30]
  - NIH Health Communications Internship Program [31]
  - Las Cumbres Observatory [32]
  - Genentech [33] internship
  - The Rita Allen Fellowship for Science Communication [34]
  - Amgen Graduate Intern in Global Scientific Communications [35]

- Get recognized. Apply for an award*
  - iBiology Young Scientist Series [36]
  - Keck Futures Initiative Communications award [37]
  - Science in Society Journalism Awards [38] through the National Association of Science Writers (NASW)
  - The American Institute of Physics Science Communication Award [39]

- You may want to consider a Science Communication Program. Should you do it? [40]
  - Some examples of these types of programs are MIT [41], UC Santa Cruz [42], and Johns Hopkins University [43]

- Consider Emma Hitt Nichols' 6-week Medical Writer Training Course [44] offered by Nascent Medical, LLC

*Note that these are just examples and deadlines occur throughout the year. Plan ahead.

Examples of organizations who hire PhDs

- Scientific Journals such as PLoS, Cell Press, Nature Reviews, PNAS, American Society for Biochemistry, Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), and Molecular Biology
- Non-profits such as iBiology and Organ Preservative Alliance
- Government funded agencies such as the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), NASA, and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)
- Biotech companies such as Addgene, Genentech, Bio-rad, Promega
- Universities such as UCSF, Penn State University, John Hopkins University, Duke University
- Exploratorium
- Forbes [47]
- Russo Partners
- ACUMED+
- Envision Pharma Group+
- Evoke Health+
- SCIENCEOMICS group+
- Meditech Media+
- BGB communications+
• Health Interactions+
• Caudex Medical+
• Articulate Science+
• CMC+
• Fishawack Communications+
• Mudskipper+

+seedropoutclub.org/resources

Find your Community

• Join the Bay Area Science Communication Meetup [49]
• Join the UCSF chapter of NeuWrite [50]
• Read and write for the UCSF student newspaper Synapse [51]
• Subscribe to a Science Communications Journal [52]
• Become an iBioambassador [53]
• Join AAAS and Trellis [54]
• Follow:
  o Carry The One Radio [55]
  o Youreka Science [56]
  o Science Sketches [57]
  o MyScienceWork [19]
• Keep up with current events:
  o Writersandeditors.com [58]
  o nasw.org [59]

Is Science Writing and Communication a good fit for you?

MyIDP Results Page

Good question! Find out by completing the AAAS's My Individual Development Plan Assessment Tool [60], which OCPD co-created. Answer three assessments and it will calculate and compare your skills/interests/values responses to key factors for 60 different career paths within 20 different career categories that are options for you as a scientist (including consulting!). Click on the image to the left to see a sample report.
Ready to start your job search?

Take a look at some example job descriptions

Scientist, Research Communications 23andMe.pdf [61]
Public Relations Counselor, Russo Partners.docx [62]
Biomedical Science Writer, Palladian Partners.docx [63]
Science Communications Manager, Cancer Research UK.pdf [64]
Scientific Communications and Writing (Public Relations), Alnylam.docx [65]
Oncology Research Analyst, BioPharma Resource Groups.docx [66]

**these are meant to serve only as examples. Actual job listing may be closed.**

Visit HigherEdJobs.com [67] to see an example job search in Editing and Publishing

Internship opportunity examples.

Clinical Research & Scientific Communications Internship, Singulex Inc.docx [68]
Johnson & Johnson CA- Innovation Center (IC) PhD Intern.pdf [69]

**these are meant to serve only as examples. Actual job listing may be closed.**

Want more help? Talk to a career counselor

Schedule a 1:1 counseling appointment for PhDs [70]

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Links