

You Won't Believe What These Scientists Found! Identifying and Overcoming Misrepresentation of Science in Mainstream Media

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Scientists have a responsibility to report their findings to the general public. However, the way scientific results are disseminated to a broader audience is frequently misleading. Authors of popular science (or “blog style”) articles often do not have a background in science, and articles may be compromised to emphasize the “wow” factor. Identifying the differences between clear, concise scientific writing and “clickbait” blogging is a vital skill to learn. In this workshop, participants gained a better understanding of science writing by comparing and contrasting the style, depth of content, and focus of a primary research article and its counterpart popular science article. By the end of this activity, students will be able to identify key components of primary research that are often missing in mainstream science reporting and will practice representing scientific research in an exciting way without misleading the reader or diluting the content. This exercise is particularly well-suited to a writing course for science majors but could also be adapted to non-major science courses.

Keywords: curriculum development, science writing

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