**Resources related to science writing: A very incomplete list**

**created by Rachel Coker at Binghamton University**

**Last update: December2020**

**A few examples of excellent science writing:**

Ed Yong of The Atlantic, writing with authority and style in a way that made this lengthy piece a must-read:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/coronavirus-american-failure/614191/>

Maggie Koerth on a panda who was really, really good at sex:

[The Complicated Legacy Of A Panda Who Was Really Good At Sex](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-complicated-legacy-of-a-panda-who-was-really-good-at-sex/)

Here she is, reflecting on the piece and the work that went into it: [Maggie Koerth-Baker Explores the Legacy of a Very Prolific Panda](https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/01/30/maggie-koerth-baker-explores-the-legacy-of-a-very-prolific-panda/)

An annotated piece of science writing from Nicholas St. Fleur of The New York Times:

[Annotated by the Author: ‘Tiny Tyrannosaur Hints at How T. Rex Became King’](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/23/learning/annotated-by-the-author-tiny-tyrannosaur-hints-at-how-t-rex-became-king.html)

Rebecca Boyle at 538 on an exceptional week in astronomy:

[Two Stars Slammed Into Each Other And Solved Half Of Astronomy’s Problems. What Comes Next?](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/two-stars-slammed-into-each-other-and-solved-half-of-astronomys-problems-what-comes-next/)

Atul Gawande on an avalanche of unnecessary care:

[America's Epidemic of Unnecessary Care](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/05/11/overkill-atul-gawande)

**What does breaking news look like when your beat is science?**

The Guardian on gravitational waves:

[Monday's gravitational wave observation is astronomical alchemy | Science](https://www.theguardian.com/science/across-the-universe/2017/oct/16/mondays-gravitational-wave-observation-is-astronomical-alchemy)

The Los Angeles Times on an earlier gravitational wave discovery:

['We can hear the universe': Scientists detect gravitational waves, predicted by Einstein](http://www.latimes.com/science/la-sci-sn-einstein-ripples-breakthrough-20160211-story.html)

**Thinking of a career in science communications?**

A slew of great resources from The Open Notebook:

[Getting Started in Science Journalism](https://www.theopennotebook.com/getting-started-in-science-journalism/)

Science writer Carl Zimmer talks about his career path as well as a fateful trip to Sudan: [Sleepless in South Sudan | Radiolab](https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/167837-sleepless-south-sudan)

Do you need a science degree to be a science reporter? There’s no single answer:

[Do You Need a Science Degree to Be a Science Reporter?](https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/08/21/do-you-need-a-science-degree-to-be-a-science-reporter/)

**Writing advice for science communicators:**Advice for writers from Roy Peter Clark:  
[Making hard facts easy reading](https://www.researchworld.com/making-hard-facts-easy-reading/)

Matt Shipman’s list of questions to ask when interviewing a scientist:

<https://sciencecommunicationbreakdown.wordpress.com/2019/06/27/questions-to-ask-when-interviewing-a-scientist/>

Thoughts on the boundaries between science communication and hype:   
[#Sci-comm vs Sci-con: Some thoughts on the boundaries between science communication and hype](https://rockedu.rockefeller.edu/blog/sci-comm-vs-sci-con-some-thoughts-on-the-boundaries-between-science-communication-and-hype)

When it comes to building trust in science, Scientific American argues there’s a role for scientists, research institutions and science communicators:

[Whose Job Is It to Help Build Public Trust in Science?](https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/whose-job-is-it-to-help-build-public-trust-in-science/)

Maria Popova offers this gradation of great writing. Explainer, Elucidator, Enchanter:

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/10/26/explainer-elucidator-enchanter-great-writing/>

Helen Pearson, features editor for Nature magazine, on science writing: Surprise me!

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2013/apr/17/helen-pearson-science-writing>

Michelle Nijhuis writes in The New York Times on “The Science and Art of Science Writing:”

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/09/the-science-and-art-of-science-writing/>

Pulitzer winner Jon Franklin on his masterpiece “Mrs. Kelly’s Monster:” <http://niemanstoryboard.org/stories/line-by-line-mrs-kellys-monster-how-jon-franklin-wrote-a-classic/>

Douglas Starr, author of *The Killer of Little Shepherds: A True Crime Story and the Birth of Forensic Science*, on the need for balance, nuance and complexity on the science beat:

<http://niemanreports.org/articles/teaching-journalism-students-to-report-on-science/>

How to read science writing:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/12/how-to-read-about-science/281855/>

Books every science writer should read (I would add Rebecca Skloot’s *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* to the list): <http://niemanreports.org/articles/books-every-science-writer-should-read/>

Inside EurekAlert, the News Hub That Shapes the Science You Read

<http://www.wired.com/2016/05/internet-hub-science-news-shaping-world-20-years/>

Jane Brody on how she became a widely known author on health and science topics:

<http://wrvo.org/post/jane-brody-story-and-success-her-health-science-writing#stream/0>

Commentary from Aaron E. Carroll about why you see so many stories on diet and health:  
[Five Reasons the Diet Soda Myth Won’t Die (Published 2019)](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/upshot/diet-soda-health-myths.html)

Naomi Oreskes on how to write about science:

<http://harvardmagazine.com/2016/07/naomi-oreskes-on-the-public-discussion-of-climate-change>

Julia Belluz on the challenges and importance of health journalism:

<http://www.vox.com/2016/2/23/11098968/health-journalism-ethics>

Can you explain an idea using only the most common English words? Here’s an example: <https://xkcd.com/1133>. This editor will show you how hard it is to do: <https://splasho.com/upgoer5>.

Using emojis to tell science and research stories:

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/finally-academics-describe-their-research-in-terms-we-can-understand/88245>

Can BuzzFeed-style articles promote scholarship?

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/why-one-professor-thinks-academics-should-write-buzzfeed-style-scholarship/55025>

Is this a story? Helpful flowchart for science writers, especially freelancers:

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/05/01/is-this-a-story/>

How the New York Times helped its reporters fall in love with spreadsheets (& link to tutorials):

[How We Helped Our Reporters Learn to Love Spreadsheets](https://open.nytimes.com/how-we-helped-our-reporters-learn-to-love-spreadsheets-adc43a93b919)

Looking for help transcribing an interview?

[Say What? A Non-Scientific Comparison of Automated Transcription Services](https://www.theopennotebook.com/2019/12/17/say-what-a-non-scientific-comparison-of-automated-transcription-services/)

Resources from the Knight Science Journalism program at MIT:

<https://ksj.mit.edu/resources/>

Clichés and jargon to avoid in science writing, curated by Carl Zimmer:  
<https://irregardless.ly/style_guides/13>

**About me and about Binghamton:**

Research news from Binghamton: [http://discovere.binghamton.edu/](http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fdiscovere.binghamton.edu%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNEfdCVNQanZWlEBVR-RJZW6UfSzEQ)

My own career story:

[http://djnf08.wordpress.com/2008/07/24/rachel-coker-djnftemple-1995-a-long-time-editor-and-community-journalist-with-a-family-makes-a-heart-felt-job-change/](http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fdjnf08.wordpress.com%2F2008%2F07%2F24%2Frachel-coker-djnftemple-1995-a-long-time-editor-and-community-journalist-with-a-family-makes-a-heart-felt-job-change%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNFX4aZl_BwXunMMj7acFuziHENIJg)

And an interview with SUNY colleagues about my day job now:

<https://sunycuad.org/2017/02/03/a-conversation-with-storyteller-extraordinaire-rachel-coker-director-of-research-advancement-binghamton-university/>

**General writing advice:**

Podcast with Terry Gross on interview technique:

<http://howtobeamazingshow.com/episodes/2018/12/3/episode-100-terry-gross>

Jacqui Banaszynski’s “literary forensics” technique helps writers edit their own work effectively:

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/05/15/jacqui-banaszynskis-literary-forensics-a-diagnostic-tool-to-improve-writing/>

On Making Oneself Less Unreadable (wisdom from Henry Fowler via the Paris Review):

<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/12/04/making-oneself-less-unreadable/>

Established journalists share the best reporting advice they have received:

<https://www.cjr.org/special_report/margaret-sullivan-fahrenthold-ioffe-ben-smith-gay-talese-steve-coll.php>

Tips from Roy Peter Clark of the Poynter Institute:

[Go early, stay late and 9 other tips to expand your writing vocabulary](http://www.poynter.org/2016/go-early-stay-late-and-9-other-tips-to-expand-your-writing-vocabulary/393202/)

10 Rules from Elmore Leonard:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/16/arts/writers-writing-easy-adverbs-exclamation-points-especially-hooptedoodle.html>

A manifesto for the simple scribe by Tim Radford:

<http://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2011/jan/19/manifesto-simple-scribe-commandments-journalists>

51 ways to improve your writing by Mike Sager:

<http://www.mikesager.com/tips/fifty-one-ways-to-improve-your-writing>

And a podcast where Mike Sager talks about his life in longform journalism:

[Write About Now](https://writeaboutnowmedia.com/podcast/2018/12/12/mike-sager-a-legend-of-longform-journalism)

Carl Zimmer, book author and blogger, reminds writers not to “make a ship in a bottle.”

<https://medium.com/the-most-powerful-drug/e163795c95af>

Kurt Vonnegut’s eight rules for great writing:

[The Kurt Vonnegut Guide to Great Copywriting: 8 Rules That Apply to Anyone](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/kurt-vonnegut-guide-copywriting)

Lee Gutkind on the “yellow test:”

<http://mobile.nytimes.com/blogs/opinionator/2012/08/27/the-yellow-test/>

Tips from The New York Times for aspiring op-ed writers:

[Opinion | Tips for Aspiring Op-Ed Writers](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/opinion/tips-for-aspiring-op-ed-writers.html)

Random House copy chief Benjamin Dreyer on redundant words to delete from your writing: <https://medium.com/p/close-proximity-end-result-and-more-redundant-words-to-delete-from-your-writing-3258be693a3d>

Susan Orlean on the magic of index cards:

<https://susanorlean.medium.com/another-essential-writing-tool-you-should-own-in-large-quantities-1b07ebe6e930>

Michael Easter on why you should read your work aloud like a radio announcer:

<https://eastermichael.medium.com/an-easy-way-to-know-if-what-youre-writing-is-good-c81d9f476e12>

**For researchers who want to communicate about their work:**

Paige Jarreau on creating an engaging science presentation:  
<https://lifeology.io/how-to-create-an-engaging-science-presentation-a-quick-guide/>

Novelist Cormac McCarthy’s tips on how to write a great science paper:  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02918-5>

Scientists as storytellers guide from 3M:

<https://www.3m.com/3M/en_US/state-of-science-index-survey/insights/scientists-as-storytellers/>

Media interviews can raise scientists' profiles -- if they prepare well and manage expectations: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-06871-7>

Advice for researchers about getting publicity for their work:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-05896-2>

Communicating science to policymakers:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02372-3>

The value of plain-language research summaries:

<https://www.msfhr.org/news/blog-posts/plain-language-summaries>

For scholars worried that reaching a general audience requires "dumbing down" their ideas: [Scholars Shouldn't Fear 'Dumbing Down' for the Public](https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/10/scholars-shouldnt-fear-dumbing-down-public/573979/?utm_source=twb)

The use of jargon kills people’s interest in science, politics:  
<https://news.osu.edu/the-use-of-jargon-kills-peoples-interest-in-science-politics>