

## Popular Science Article Assignment

**Goal:** The goal of this assignment is to give you experience in popular scientific writing. Whatever career you pursue as a biologist, you will often have to read complex scientific writing, interpret it, and make it understandable for a wider audience. You may also need to take dry scientific material and make it exciting and intriguing for a non-specialist.

In this assignment, you must choose a scientific article of your choice that pertains to your semester long project and write a 450 to 550-word popular science article about the study. You should write in the style and tone of a newspaper article, such as you would find in the science section of the *New York Times* (see examples here: [www.nytimes.com/pages/science](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/science)) or *Science Daily* (<http://www.sciencedaily.com>).

**Voice:** In writing this popular press article, you should adopt the voice of a science journalist. Be as engaging as you can, to draw readers into your article. Do not provide tiny details of the source article. Instead, focus on the main points, the key questions, the most critical methods, and the primary conclusions. Connect your article to the broader world of biology, by explaining to the reader why the source article is important and the way that it moves the research forward. If you wish, you can briefly connect the findings of your chosen article to other articles from the literature or news articles, but the focus should be on your one chosen journal article.

**Format:** At the top of the page please include your name and date. Follow this with a title for your assignment. You should choose a good title, similar to what you might read in the Science section of the *New York Times* or on *Science Daily.com*. Please print your article on single-spaced, in 12-point font, using either Arial or Helvetica font. At the end of your popular science article, please type out a full reference for your source paper (e.g. Authors, Year, Title, Volume, Page Numbers).

**Word Limit:** Your popular science article must be between 450 and 550 words (not including the title, or the words mentioned above in the "Format" section, etc.).

**Academic Integrity:** This assignment should be completed entirely independently. No two submitted assignments should share any writing in common. No strings of text should be taken directly from the source article. The popular science article should be written entirely in your own words, summarizing the ideas in your chosen article.

**Evaluation:** 50% of your grade will be based on content: Have you broken down the science of your source article to make it understandable for a lay audience? Did you emphasize the primary findings of the source article, and avoid presenting less important points? Are the primary conclusions of the paper interpreted and summarized correctly? Have you provided good reasons for why this work is important? Etc. The other 50% of your grade will be based on style. Is your writing clear? Have you adopted the voice of a science journalist? Would the language be understandable for a general reader of the *New York Times* (the target audience)? Have you minimized use of the passive voice? (Here is a [link](#) for information on active versus passive voice; modern and engaging scientific writers minimize use of the passive voice.)

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