

Careers in Science

Science Communicator

Not all people who are interested in science want to work in a lab or even in a single field of science. Some people who have a strong interest in science prefer to communicate scientific ideas.

Science writers and other science communicators generally report about the work and research of others, especially new discoveries and topics of controversy. To do their job, they must be able to formulate and ask questions to help them learn what they need to know to build their explanations. They read scientific publications, attend press conferences, and interview scientists and other people involved in the topic. They are careful to consult credible sources of information and to report their findings accurately.

Some science writers produce articles for other scientists. These may be articles in scientific journals, research reports, or technical manuals. However, most science communicators explain science to people who aren't scientists. Their audiences include the public, governments, and businesses. For example, a science communicator might produce information to help businesses use a new discovery. He or she might give testimony on the science of a current dispute.

Many science communicators develop nonfiction articles about science and scientists for the general public. They may write for magazines, newspapers, and Internet publications. They may write books or parts of books. They may produce diagrams and other visuals. They may develop scripts for science shows or provide information so that other shows can be accurate.

Science writers and other science communicators often have science degrees or journalism degrees. They need strong communication skills, as well as curiosity and passion about a range of scientific concepts. Science communicators work to develop their ability to explain science concepts, whether in words or in other forms. They try to provide the scientific or other background needed to understand a topic or issue, as well as the aspect of science that is the main topic.

FIGURE 14: A science communicator may explain her own work as well as that of others. She may explain the science behind important issues.



Language Arts Connection

Suppose you are a science writer who has been commissioned to write a brief article about the big bang theory for middle school students, for whom the topic is new. Use information obtained from this lesson and from reliable print and online resources to develop an article outline, a first draft that is peer reviewed, and a final draft. Present clearly three lines of evidence that support the big bang theory. Use descriptive language that is scientifically accurate and appropriate for the target audience.