

**COMMUNICATING SKILLS***Science Writing*

Suppose you are a scientist and you have just discovered a cure for “mad cow disease.” Now you want to report your findings to other scientists. **Science writing** is a particular style of writing. It is different from the writing in newspaper articles or mystery stories. Science writing sticks to the facts, observations, and conclusions of an experiment or study. How is this different from the writing in a novel?

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**Find the Facts**

One paragraph below is written like a scientific report, and one is written more informally. Read both paragraphs, and then answer the following questions.

**Report #1:**

I sat in the chair by the window, watching the rain. It seemed that the rain came down angrily, as if to punish the Earth. As I wrote in my journal, I thought about the earthworms. The worms were coming out of the ground, having been drowned out of their dark lairs. Did they feel differently when they reached the surface? Did they notice the pounding of the rain? Did they sense the poetry of the moment, as I did?

**Report #2:**

I watched the rain from a chair by the window. I wrote my observations in my journal. The rain was coming down quite hard. After it had been raining for a while, I noticed several earthworms emerging from underground. Over the next 20 minutes, more earthworms appeared. Apparently, as the ground became soaked with water, the earthworms came to the surface for air.

Which style seems more scientific to you? Explain your answer with specific examples from the paragraphs.

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Science Writing, continued

### Not Quite Human

When you tell a friend, “My turtle misses me when I am at school,” do you think your turtle really has human emotions? Sometimes we act as if nonhuman things have thoughts or emotions similar to our own. Giving human thoughts, feelings, or actions to nonhuman organisms and objects is called **anthropomorphism**.

Most of the time, anthropomorphism is harmless. But in science writing, it can distort your experimental results and confuse your reader. **Be careful!**

From the two reports on page 54, list examples of anthropomorphism.

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How do you think anthropomorphism in a science report can be misleading?

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### More Suggestions

There are different approaches to science writing. Sometimes you may give a report on your investigation and simply list your facts and observations in order. Other times you may debate a hypothesis. In that case, organize your paper or speech as a series of facts or observations that support your position.

Always remember who you are writing for. Writing your science report for a class of third-graders is different from writing about it for a science magazine. What are some of the differences you can think of? Write those differences below.

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#### TROUBLESHOOTING

The primary characteristic of science writing is that it is **objective**, meaning that it relies on facts and avoids inferences. Keep this in mind as you practice your science writing.

#### TRY THIS!

Find and contrast two examples of scientific writing. Even though they are both science writing, how are they different?

