



CASCADE course

“Communicating research to the public and to media”
Stockholm, Sweden 17 -22 November 2008

CASCADE is a European Network of Excellence in research, risk assessment, and education concerning endocrine-disrupting chemicals in food. CASCADE is financed by the European Union 6th Framework Programme (FP6). More than 200 scientists are working within CASCADE.

For more information, please visit:

www.cascadenet.org

Tips for successful popular science writing

An interesting headline, free from acronyms, numbers and too long words, maximum fifteen words

This is a lead. A lead should be around three or four sentences. It should give answers on the question “what?” and “how?”. The sentences should not be too long.

To start with, you must be clear about who is the receiver of your text; for whom you write. The answer to the question ‘who is my reader’ is given by the purpose you have with your text; who you want to reach. Try to always keep the reader in your mind when writing.

Your start and outline

Start with the most important thing. Your text should give the answers on the questions what?, why?, how?, when? and maybe also who? and/or for whom?, preferably in that order. Divide your text in paragraphs. When you switch from one piece of information to another, it is time for a fresh paragraph.

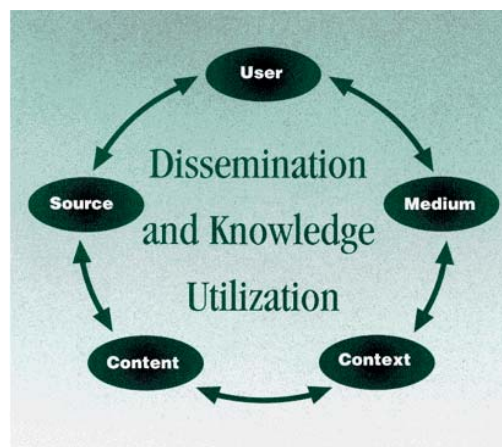
Brevity, clarity, effectiveness

Excess words and digressions might hide the message; brevity and concentration force you to be clear. Clarity means, when choosing between two expressions, choose the simpler one that uses fewer words. Make your text effective by engaging the reader, by approach her directly.

The language matters

Avoid technical language. Short words and sentences will help, when subject and the line of reasoning become complicated. A sentence that most people can read easily has at most twenty five words. You create a rhythm of a text by varying sentence length. Begin your sentences with the subject and verb and always choose verbs rather than noun.

Be careful with adverbs. Use them in the active voice. Be concrete and exemplify, but do avoid clichés and overused expressions.



Pictures attract attention, do not forget the caption. (Westbrook, 1998, p.14)

Revise your text

Read it through. Read aloud. Change font, change font size, print your article and read it in paper version. Let someone else read through your text. There are several good ways to revise your text, but there is only one thing that is really important to remember; that you actually do it. Your text should be re-read at least twice.

Only if you like to

At last; the layout is not the most important thing. You will probably get help with this from the magazine or journal that you are writing for since they probably will have professional editors that will do this for you. Still, if you want your text to look more magazine like, you could choose to put your texts in two columns, use headers, titles and subtitles. This helps the readers to understand your subject. In addition, to make your text look more like a real magazine text is often the most fun part of the work.

Jill Jönsson