**Writing for Non-Specialist Audiences – Assignment**

Click on [this link](http://www.bmj.com/content/351/bmj.h3942) to read a journal article published in the open-access journal, *BMJ (British Medical Journal),* on August 4, 2015 (doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h3942)*.* You may wish to save/print your own PDF copy.

This research article was written for a specialist (medical science) audience. Note how it follows the I-M-R-A-D (Introduction – Methods – Results – and – Discussion) roadmap of a typical journal article. Given the interesting findings, and their implications, this research would be interesting to non-specialist audiences that would be unlikely to read it in this specialist publication.

Imagine that you are a science reporter and have been asked by your editor to write a short article (250 – 300 words) for the newspaper.

**Style Hints – Developing Your Article**

1. Specific detail is important in journal articles; however, informal (even quirky) writing, without too many details (like those found in a science journal article’s methods section), is more likely to capture the imagination of the casual reader.
2. Jargon should not appear in journalistic writing if at all possible. If you find yourself needing to include any technical jargon, make sure you explain its meaning in layman’s terms as well.
3. While thinking about the best *hook* for your story, remember that telling a simple, easy-to-understand story is your goal. While a journal article may report many findings, it is usually best to focus on one for a newspaper-style article (try to choose the most newsworthy).
4. If/when you do need to include something complex for a non-specialist audience, try to add in a descriptive simile or metaphor that uses an everyday example to help comprehension.
5. There are many different ways of attempting to structure a journalistic article. One such approach is to include the **5 W’s** (the who, what, where, when, why) in the first two paragraphs of an article/post. Journalists sometimes refer to this as *the lead*. Aim to write a lead in no more than 50 words.
6. Develop the story with more specific information and quotations after the lead by working down the *inverted pyramid*of information (see below). Add to the story by including content of increasing depth and decreasing breadth.



1. Include quotations from relevant sources to make the story more interesting and add a personal touch as well as credibility, **but make sure these quotations say something useful.** Try to ensure they add something to the story (they don’t just repeat information already paraphrased beforehand) and make sure they are interesting and easy to understand.
2. Choose a quirky, snappy title for the article, to draw people in. Shorter is sweeter in most cases.
3. Try to think of any relevant images that you would add to your article to boost readership. But remember to credit the source of any image, just as you would cite a source used in an essay or lab report.

**Grading Criteria (Distribution of 25 Marks)**

1. **0 – 2 marks for your choice of a snappy, engaging, relevant title**
2. **0 – 3 marks for the succinctness and simplicity of your lead (include the 5 W’s)**
3. **0 – 3 marks for your choice and ordering of quotes (see below)**
4. **0 – 3 marks for limiting the use of jargon**
5. **0 – 3 marks for using a good simile/metaphor to explain something complex**
6. **0 – 3 marks for balancing some specific detail with the need for a simple story**
7. **0 – 3 marks for your choice of image (see below) and an appropriate caption**
8. **0 – 5 marks for the quality of your writing (logical structure, grammar etc.)**

**3. Quotes (0-3 marks)**

Remember to only choose quotes that add something interesting and/or relevant to the story. Four *fictional* quotes are listed below.

You may incorporate any/all of these, but you will be assessed on your choice and on the order in which you use them. **Hint: You don’t have to use all of these quotes.**

*Nutritionist, Bailey Reilly, said: “This is really interesting but before we advise everyone to rush out to their local produce stores to stock up on chillies, we need to be certain this is not just an association and a real, cause-and-effect relationship.”*

*Thai restaurant owner, Naomi Wei, said: “This is no surprise to my family. The Weis have been eating chillies every day for generations and we generally live long, healthy lives.”*

*Nutritionist, Jonny Nolan, said: “This study showed that people who ate chilli more frequently than others were significantly less likely to die within the study period.”*

*Associate Professor at Trinity Biomedical Centre, Yolanda Kennedy, said: “Because we are looking at a correlation only, I think it’s too early to say for sure that eating chilli will help you live longer, but there are scientific reasons to think it might. For example, we know that chilli can help break down fat, and high levels of body fat are associated with an increased risk of heart disease.”*

**7. Image (0-3 marks) and caption**

Try to find a suitable image to accompany your article. Once you have found it, insert a link to the image online (to reference where you found it) and write a suitable caption. *Hint: Use the Google Images advanced search (*[*http://www.google.com/advanced\_image\_search*](http://www.google.com/advanced_image_search)*)*. *This search option allows you to add a filter for usage rights (****select free to use or share, even commercially****) to make sure you do not infringe on any copyrights.*