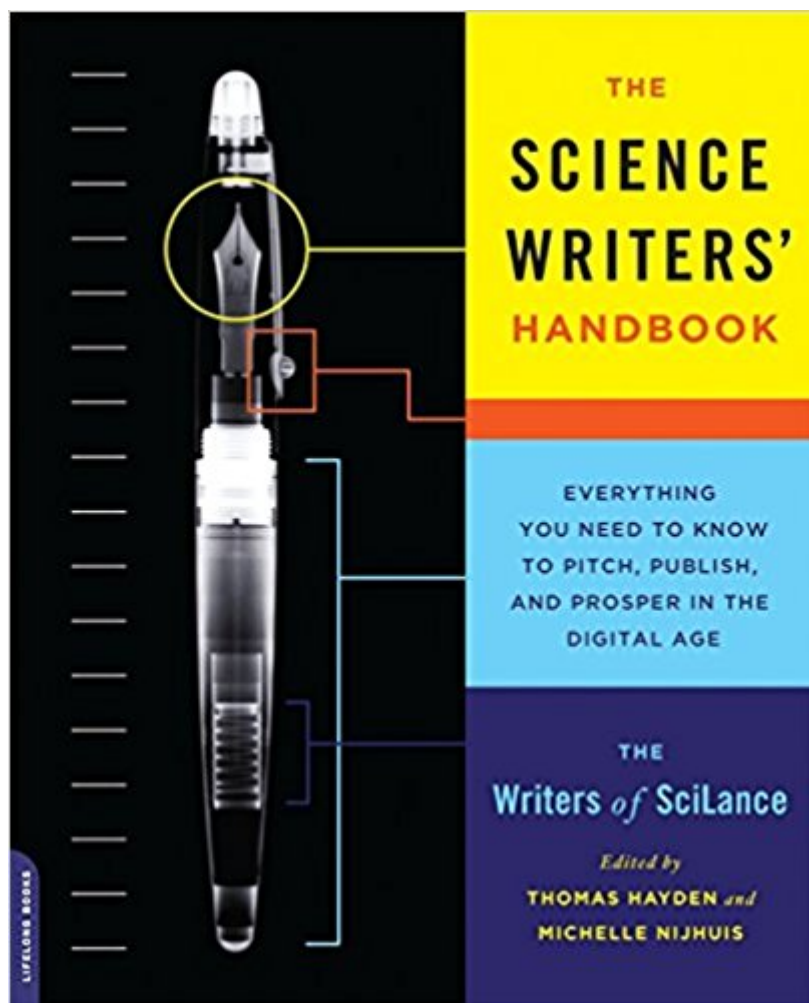




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# The Science Writers' Handbook: Everything You Need To Know To Pitch, Publish, And Prosper In The Digital Age



## Synopsis

This indispensable guide shows you how to:

- \* Jump-start your career as a freelance or staff science writer
- \* Develop stories and hooks that editors can't resist
- \* Find ideas, pitch stories and report narrative
- \* Navigate the emotional side of writing (envy, loneliness, rejection)
- \* Handle the business details (contracts, taxes, retirement saving, insurance)
- \* Balance freelance work with the rest of your life--even kids

With over 300 years of hard-won experience, the Writers of SciLance know how to prosper in the evolving world of popular science writing. They want you to succeed too. Whether you're new to the field or a seasoned veteran, these award-winning pros will help you to polish skills, improve business smarts, and create community in what is a rewarding but often solitary field. As a close-knit community of 35 science writers, The Writers of SciLance have worked as staffers and freelancers for newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, and web sites; as public information officers; and as corporate, university, and non-profit organization writers. Their articles on nearly every science topic imaginable have appeared in National Geographic, Discover Magazine, Smithsonian, the New York Times, The Washington Post, and scores of other outlets. They have won prestigious journalism awards, written best-selling books, and contributed to leading anthologies. SciLancers have taught science writing at Johns Hopkins, Stanford and in workshops throughout Canada and the United States, and been awarded Scripps, MIT-Knight, and Alicia Patterson Foundation journalism fellowships. They live in communities big and small scattered across North America, with partners, children, dogs, cats and even a parrot.

PitchPublishProsper.com

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"Writing about science can be exalting, enlightening, and rewarding. It can also be maddening, baffling, and terrifying. The Science Writers' Handbook is dense with sage advice on how to make your experience the former rather than the latter. These are lessons it takes years to learn on one's own; this book feels like a wonderful cheat sheet for the profession." - Carl Zimmer, author, *Evolution: Making Sense of Life* "Each passing day science writing, like its subject, becomes more important to us all. Students and young professionals need a lot of advice and encouragement, and this book provides them." - Edward O. Wilson, University Research Professor, Emeritus, Harvard University, and author of *Letters To A Young Scientist* "An ailing planet badly needs more skilled science writers. And this fine guide will help produce them, I'm pretty sure." - Bill McKibben, author, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* "Don't become a science writer. It's hard, and the competition is fierce. Just look at the authors of this book--they're great at it. But if you insist on ignoring me (probably because science writers get to learn the secrets of the universe, meet the most fascinating people, educate readers, and save the planet), then at least listen to them. I do not say this lightly: This book tells you what you need to know." - Adam Rogers, senior editor, *Wired* "At its best, science writing weaves together quests for knowledge, personal struggles, rivalry and conflicts, and moments of great insight to reveal how science works and why it matters. This book shows you how to write science stories that count." - Siri Carpenter, senior editor, *Discover Magazine* and co-founder, *The Open Notebook* "In a world growing ever more complex, people with a talent to explain are in demand. Nowhere is this truer than in science writing--a field that is entering a vibrant new age. Whether you're a beginner or a veteran, these reports from the frontline provide an invaluable guide." - George Johnson, author of *The Cancer Chronicles: Unlocking Medicine's Deepest Mystery* and cofounder and director of the Santa Fe Science Writing Workshop *New York Journal of Books*, 5/1/13 "Whether you are breaking into the field or a seasoned professional, this book is dense with advice from the SciLance workgroup, which boasts 225 years of combined experience." - Knight Science Journalism at MIT (website), 5/3/13 "I found the book entertaining and enlightening, and that's coming from someone who's been at this for a while. You'd be smart to take a look." - Infodad.com, 5/23/13 "A useful and even uplifting guide." - Worlds of R.A. Hertz, 5/27/13 "The perfect tool for anyone seeking to break into the writing about science." - ASJA Monthly, June 2013 "Superb." - San Francisco/Sacramento Book Review, 5/31/13 "Has everything a writer will need to take the big step into science writing." - Choice, October 2013 "This exceptionally timely resource illuminates many of the modern frustrations

of science writing&#133;This highly readable book will benefit anyone interested in the field of science journalism. Highly recommended.â •Choice, October 2013

Thomas Hayden teaches science writing, environmental journalism and sustainability science in Stanford University's School of Earth Sciences and Graduate Program in Journalism.Â A former oceanographer, he also continues to work as a freelance science journalist and author. Formerly a staff reporter at Newsweek and a senior writer at US News & World Report, his cover stories have appeared there as well as in National Geographic, Wired, Smithsonian and many other publications. He has co-authored two previous books, the national bestseller *On Call in Hell* and the critically acclaimed *Sex and War*,Â and was lead writer for the 2010 9th edition of the iconic National Geographic Atlas of the World. Michelle Nijhuis is a freelance journalist and a longtime contributing editor of High Country News. Her work has appeared in numerous other publications including Smithsonian, National Geographic, the Atlantic, the New York Times, Orion, Audubon, and the Christian Science Monitor. A lapsed biologist, she specializes in long-form stories about conservation and global change, but she has covered stories ranging from border security to wrestling. Her reporting on science and the environment has won multiple national journalism honors, and her writing has been included in the anthologies *Best American Science Writing* and *Best American Science and Nature Writing*. In 2011, as an Alicia Patterson Foundation fellow, she researched and wrote about the science and ethics of rescuing critically endangered species. She lives off the grid in rural western Colorado.

This is an outstandingly practical and useful book that every new science writer needs as the essential starting point in the profession. It covers a wide array of topics with an impressively large group of authors. Science writing has come a long way in the past three decades. This is the book that is needed for today's science writing world. Not to date myself too much, but I remember the pivotal year for science writing in America -- 1980. That year saw the debut of two commercial, broad magazines for science (more broad than the stodgy *Scientific American* at the time) -- one that made it (*Discover*) and one that bit the dust (*Science 80*, which was eventually absorbed by *Discover*). At the same time several major science writing programs were launched including the one at M.I.T. that I had a close friend in the inaugural class. Science writing has come a long way since. It's a new world with the internet and a world where prospective science writers desperately need the advice not of some dinosaurs (kinda like some of the professors I had in film school who hadn't made a film since before the age of computers), but of multiple working science writers of

today. This is exactly that book, and assembled by Thomas Hayden, who is the sort of veteran of both the working world (was a science writer with US News and World Report) and the teaching world (now at Stanford). It takes both sets of skills to make a book that will be useful and coherent, as he has done with this book. The various chapters pretty much take you from start to full speed in a science writing career -- all written in very personable, conversational writing styles. Actually, now that I think of it, that's kind of the crucial test for something like this -- really wouldn't work well to have a book on how to establish a career in writing that was poorly written (and yet, I just read a popular book on screenwriting that's exactly that -- poorly written). Have to say of all the chapters, my favorites are the ones on rejection and envy by Rosner and Nijhuis. Love that Hilary even got rejected by her house cleaner. I've had days like that. Really a great book assembled by the right group. When I was in science graduate school we came to realize the important resource was not our hyper-busy professors but rather our peer group of grad students. There's a similar feel to this valuable and practical book.

While this excellent guide is titled *The Science Writers' Handbook*, it will be helpful to any freelancer. It will be a great addition to any journalism curriculum. More broadly it will benefit scientists contemplating writing for popular media, and in fact any scientists wanting to understand the freelance journalists interviewing them for stories. The book uniquely goes beyond covering the techniques of freelance science writing, which it explains extremely well. It also offers invaluable advice about the business, personal and ethical complexities of the career, told by a cadre of savvy freelancers. Among the many things I liked about the book was the authors' willingness not only to tell of their triumphs, but also their failures and what they learned from them.

This book is a fantastic resource for novice and experienced science writers. What I appreciated most was that it addressed not only journalism issues such as reporting and constructing narratives, but also topics important to freelancers such as work-life balance, health insurance, and contract negotiation. A readable and witty guide for navigating the new landscape of science journalism.

Picked this up on the recommendation of a friend, figuring I'd read the chapters with straightforward practical advice (e.g. on contract law, journalistic ethics, sources, etc.). However, I ended up reading it cover to cover, and really enjoying it. The practical advice was very good, but it was also really interesting and useful to read so many different perspectives (each chapter is written by a different science journalist) on common issues faced by science journalists, and by freelance writers in

general. I'm still trying to get my wife to read the chapter on work-life boundaries in a home office... :)

A really well-written and informative book about writing and pitching science stories, with lots of very useful advice and tips. I greatly appreciate the frank first-person anecdotes from professional science writers. It has given me hope and the confidence to soldier on with my science writing career, despite my, ahem, "age." And, in fact, I have my first local science writing gig that will hopefully lead to bigger (and better paying!) stories in the future. I highly recommend this book to aspiring science writers.

Reading "The Science Writers' Handbook" is like making a lot of new friends - they all know how to make it as writers, and they all want to help you make it too. I got tons out of this book even though I've been a science writer for 25 years. I wish it had been around when I started! One more thing: the authors are science writers but their experiences and advice translate to all kinds of writing.

The SciLance writers have put a very unique and comprehensive resource together that will guide writers beyond the niche of science. What is more, they have created a blog at [pitchpublishprosper.com](http://pitchpublishprosper.com) to which they all contribute. These short, intimate pieces inspire a sense of community, offer encouragement, and give readers an even closer look at the day-to-day of science writers.

I've been a scientist, and a writer, and have even put them together sometimes, but this book is full of practical advice; pitching, interviewing, etc... as well as the money aspect

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