



Mentor Roles & Responsibilities

Role of Curious Science Writer Mentors:

The goal of Curious Science Writers (cSw) is to offer students a window into the real world of science communications. Unlike the assignments they've had in school, at cSw, they won't be working for a grade. Instead, they will receive a [somewhat] realistic experience of what it is like to work as a science communicator.

As a mentor, you will serve as what Merriam-Webster calls "a trusted counselor or guide." You are experienced in communicating about the life sciences. Now, you want to share your knowledge and experience with bright, young minds. You realize that, although these students are motivated and high achieving in school, most have never worked alongside adults as equals in a professional setting.

You know when to step in, when to let a student follow their vision, when to teach, and when to inspire. You provide advice and coaching on how to request an interview from a scientist, and how to respond to edits from a scientist. You review early drafts for proper structure and scientific accuracy. In the final stages of the writing process, you take the opportunity to challenge students: Is there a better way to say something? Can another word be used? Is there an opportunity to use a metaphor, etc.

If this sounds like you, we look forward to having you as part of the cSw team.

Program Overview and Timelines:

Before the cSw Boot Camp, on or before June 1st cSw organizers will provide mentors with:

- Mentee's name, current grade level, contact info.
- The biomedical topic chosen by the mentee from a list of options. Students will have begun to research their topics and to think about the stories they want to tell. Final stories will be about 750 words in length.
- A time frame during boot camp to meet mentee via video call.
- A detailed curriculum for the boot camp, which will include presentations by experts and skill-building exercises designed to teach students how to use the power of story to bring complex biomedical science to the general public.

During the cSw Boot Camp – Monday, July 12th – Friday, July 16th:

- Introduction to mentee via email on July 12th followed by a phone or video conference call that week.
- Mentee to provide a summary of their researched topic along with a list of sources to date.
- Mentor should be available to respond to mentee emails asking for advice on sources, content experts, and draft(s) of emails to content experts.
- **Optional:** An opportunity for mentor to virtually attend a portion of the boot camp to share a brief bio along with tips for becoming an effective science communicator.

Following the cSw Boot Camp – July 2021 – August 2021:

- Confirm mode of communication with mentee – email, phone or video conferencing. We propose that email communications be used to communicate specific edits and exchange drafts with at least one phone or video conference. Please cc info@curioussciencewriters.org on all communications with the student.
- Schedule first call with student, ideally within a week of the end of boot camp.

- Prior to this call: Student should prepare and share with their mentor a timeline for completing key milestones, such as interviewing content expert(s), submitting an initial draft, and scheduling subsequent status update calls.
- During the call: Confirm content experts for outreach and advise student on how to effectively request an interview (if not done previously during boot camp).
 - During the call: Advise student on interview strategies/possible interview questions.
- During the call: If needed, guide development of content expert(s) outreach strategy.
- Subsequent discussions should focus on the student's progress and setting a deadline for the next draft. These periodic status updates (we anticipate at three to four) should occur at strategic times during the process, i.e., when an interview is scheduled, after an interview is conducted (mentor should confirm student's understanding of the science), when writing begins, etc.
- Based on the mentee's progress, the mentor and mentee will mutually agree on how many drafts are required until the story can be sent to scientific expert(s) to be reviewed for accuracy.
- Student should share the expert's edits and comments with their mentor and discuss how to incorporate suggested changes into a revised draft. If the expert's edits are minor, this revised draft can go directly to the cSw Chief Student Editor. If the edits are major, the student should send a revised draft back to the scientific expert(s) to review again for scientific accuracy.
- The final version, approved by scientific expert(s), is turned over to the cSw Chief Student Editor, who will manage final copy-editing and coordinate the development of graphics.
- Finalized stories, each with an illustration produced by cSw student graphic designers, will be published during the academic year on the [cSw blog](#) and shared on social media pages.

Reminders to mentors:

- Please cc info@curioussciencewriters.org on all communications. This protects you and the student and also allows us to confirm that things are on track.
- Ensure that your student communicates with you at critical points during the writing period – following the interview, developing an outline/plan for writing, structuring the first draft, refining subsequent drafts.
- Your role is to encourage and inspire. Help your student gain the skills needed to improve their writing—and their interactions with scientific experts—on their own.
- Suggest additional sources and/or storylines that may be helpful for the student.
- Share your expertise. Don't hesitate to describe what has worked well for you.

Mentor Timeline/Time Commitment:

- **June 15th to July 11th:** Become familiar with mentee's topic, preliminary sources and potential content experts.
- **Week of July 12th:** Meet with mentee via phone/video call.
- **Week of July 12th.** Optional – pop into the virtual boot camp to say hello and share your career path along with a science communications tip (~15 minutes)
- **July 2021 – August 2021:** Work with mentee to challenge, advise and encourage as he/she writes and refines their article.
- **Note:** A limited number of writers will be selected to have their second draft also reviewed by a student editor. We will let you know if your student is selected for this review.
- **Optional:** Participate in Mentor Communications Forum via calls, emails or video conferencing to share ideas, thoughts, experience with other mentors.
- **Optional:** Stories will be published on a rolling basis. Students will meet with the Curious Science Writers student editorial team during the month before their story is scheduled for publication. cSw will share the publication calendar with mentors. Mentors are welcome to attend that meeting to be involved in the editing process if desired.

We are grateful for your willingness to inspire and guide future science communicators!