

REWRITE THE HEAD LINES



Welcome to Rewrite the Headlines

This guide will take you through the process of entering our Rewrite the Headlines competition. It is intended for undergraduate students, and full Terms and Conditions are included at the end of the guide.

The guide includes details of what you need to do to enter, including some useful hints and tips. If you have any questions as you prepare your entry, just get in touch rewritetheheadlines@youngacademyofscotland.org.uk.

First off, do make sure you check out our regular posts at <http://researchtheheadlines.org/>. Our blog has useful articles commenting on ways to assess research coverage in the media. You might find our How to “Research the Headlines” series useful too: <http://researchtheheadlines.org/how-to-research-the-headlines/>.

You can follow us on Twitter [@ResTheHeadlines](https://twitter.com/ResTheHeadlines), and find us on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/researchtheheadlines>. If you’re connecting via social media, don’t forget to use #RewriteTheHeadlines.

Here's what you need to do...

To enter Rewrite the Headlines, you are going to write a short blog-style post. It will be in the style of those at Research the Headlines (<http://researchtheheadlines.org/>), but there are some more pointers below. You will first identify a piece of research that has been featured in the media. Your task is then to provide a summary and critique of the original research and the reporting of it, in a clear and accessible style. The competition will therefore utilise the skills you have been developing throughout your undergraduate training in understanding research methods and findings, and will ensure you are able to communicate this effectively in different ways.

1. Find a news story

The first part of the process is to identify a relevant piece of research that has appeared in the media. There are many possible areas of interest. You should consider research broadly; if a media report refers to findings, surveys, studies, research, or any related variant of those, then it is something that could be considered. You might want to focus on the area you’re currently studying, but you can go beyond that if you wish.

The research can come from any subject area, and it might be quantitative or qualitative, be with people of any age, or from work with animals or cells in the lab. It could be related to health or social policy, psychology or chemistry, astrophysics or history, or...there really is no limit. Entries are encouraged from all subject areas! The key thing is that the media report is based on research in some form (or at least suggests it's based on research, more on that below).

Try to find relatively recent coverage (i.e. from August 2015 onwards), and focus on recognisable media outlets (for example well-known print media, broadcasters or websites).

If your subject area isn't commonly in the news, you may need to search further back. That's ok, but try to keep it as current as possible.

To summarise, you first need to find one media report of a relatively recent research paper. You might also be able to find a press release for your chosen research paper. If it exists, it might provide a useful link between the research and the media reporting of it, but it's not a requirement (not all research in the media will have an associated press release).

2. Writing up your blog

Writing this blog might be quite different to the essays and other university assessments you're used to, but that doesn't mean points of writing style or content do not apply. For this piece, you should consider the audience as a well-informed individual, but not an expert on the topic. It may be more informal in tone than an essay, for example, but be careful not to become too conversational. Below are some other specific points to consider.

Title: In general, keep your title concise, informative and interesting. For your entry, limit your title to no more than 20 words. Try to avoid sensational titles (unless of course you're quoting or playing with a sensational headline in your title) as this is where many media reports introduce exaggeration or errors.

The blog: The purpose of the blog is to summarise and then discuss your chosen research paper and how it was reported in one media report. You will therefore be evaluating both the methods and conclusions of the research study and the media's interpretation of it. How you structure the main piece of writing is up to you. You might want to consider dividing it into sections with relevant headings, but the way you do that is flexible. In describing both the research study and the media report, ensure your blog is written for a general, non-expert audience; explain things in a clear and accessible style.

Make sure you include:

- An indication of the context of this research for the non-expert reader;
- Details of what was done in the research including the participants and methods;
- A summary of the main findings;
- What the limitations of the methods/analysis might be;
- How the study was reported in the media, including if it there were relevant mentions of the research team and the journal;
- Whether the methods and results were accurately described by the media or whether anything was wrongly reported, exaggerated, or missed.

These are just a few suggestions, but it is not an exhaustive list and there are many other things you will want to consider. In critiquing your research paper, you might find some of the concepts in this article useful (though not all will apply to every study):

<http://www.nature.com/news/policy-twenty-tips-for-interpreting-scientific-claims-1.14183>

and some other pointers appear here:

<http://researchtheheadlines.org/2014/11/12/how-to-research-the-headlines/>

In addition, the points above shouldn't be seen as a series of things to include. Think about producing an interesting and compelling evaluation, rather than simply listing and describing.

An important point to note is that while in some cases the media reporting might be weak or contain errors, in others the media might have done a very good job, while in others still it might be the research that has major weaknesses that weren't addressed or discussed by the researchers. Whether your piece is a positive or negative appraisal of the research and the media report, it must be justified by the content of those primary sources.

There may be a press release associated with your chosen research. If it exists, it can often give an interesting insight into how the research has been translated into headlines. If you want to get a sense of the process, you can read about one of our contributor's experiences:

<http://researchtheheadlines.org/2014/11/26/read-all-about-it-from-bench-to-newsstand/>

Do, however, remember that press releases are generally prepared by the researchers or their institutions, and can therefore sometimes include exaggerations. To get some insight into that, the following post summarises (and contains a link to) recent research about this:

<http://researchtheheadlines.org/2014/12/19/lies-damned-lies-and-statistics-about-press-releases/>

For examples of how Research the Headlines has discussed research in the media, have a read of some of the posts:

<http://researchtheheadlines.org/>

The topics covered by these posts aren't exhaustive, so don't worry if your subject hasn't been covered there. We want entries from all subject areas. Also, you'll see that each of our contributors uses their own style. We want you to do that too, using the information here to guide you.

Your details: At the end of the blog, include your name and email address, the university you're studying at, and the name of your degree course. Give the main subject area that your blog covers too.

Word count: Your entry should be no more than 1000 words. At the end of the blog, include the word count for your title and the word count for your blog (note, the title and references are not included in the latter word count).

References: Your references should come after the main body of the blog and word counts. You must acknowledge all sources mentioned in the body of the blog (your reference list is not counted in word count). For the blog, you will have two main references: the research article and the media report. The reference list should be in the accepted style for your subject area. However, in the body of the blog you will not want to use traditional reference formats as this would look unusual to many readers. This is not an essay, so limit the references to the few that are essential.

General formatting: Don't use any special formatting for your entry. Keep it simple (one style of font and size, for example). You might use bold text to highlight section headers if you're using those, but other than that, let your content do the talking.

3. Entering the competition

When you're ready to submit your competition entry, email it as a Word file to rewritetheheadlines@youngacademyofscotland.org.uk. The Word file should be labelled with your name as follows: Surname, Name. You should mark the subject header of your email UG competition entry.

The closing date for entries is 11 January 2016. Late entries cannot be accepted. Full Terms and Conditions are included below.

Terms and conditions

The competition is open to entries from all subject areas.

Competition entrants must be an undergraduate student enrolled at a Scottish university.

Students should not submit more than one entry. In the case of multiple entries, only the first entry received will be judged.

Submissions must be the work of the named student only; joint entries are not permitted. Any direct quotes included must be correctly attributed. By submitting your entry, you confirm that the work is your own and that you have not used the work of others, unless correctly cited.

Your entry must not appear in print or online before the competition closes in January 2016. Any entries which are featured elsewhere before the competition closes will not be considered by the judging panel.

By submitting, you are agreeing to your entry being used as a blog post on the Research the Headlines website with your name included. It may also be used as part of future promotional or other material (you will not be required to participate in this promotional material, if you do not wish, but again your name may be included).

All entries will be judged by an expert panel, and winners will be notified by email. Winners will be invited to the prize giving ceremony in January 2016, and may be asked to participate in press coverage.

Rewrite the Headlines is an initiative of Research the Headlines, jointly led by Dr Sinead Rhodes (University of Strathclyde) and Dr Alan Gow (Heriot-Watt University).



The competition is funded by a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award to Dr Gow.



[Research the Headlines](#) is a working group of the [RSE Young Academy of Scotland](#).

All enquiries relating to Rewrite the Headlines should be directed to rewritetheheadlines@youngacademyofscotland.org.uk.

Use of materials

All Rewrite the Headlines materials are free for use out with the main competition. You do not need to ask permission to use these, however, we would appreciate hearing of any usage (researchtheheadlines@youngacademyofscotland.org.uk). The original source must be acknowledged when using any Rewrite the Headlines materials. Materials were devised and developed for primary schools by Dr Sinead Rhodes (University of Strathclyde), and for undergraduates by Dr Alan Gow (Heriot-Watt University), with input from members of the [RSE Young Academy of Scotland](#) and [Research the Headlines](#). Rewrite the Headlines is an initiative of [Research the Headlines](#), jointly led by Dr Sinead Rhodes and Dr Alan Gow. The competition is supported by funding from the British Academy, with additional funding from the University of Strathclyde.