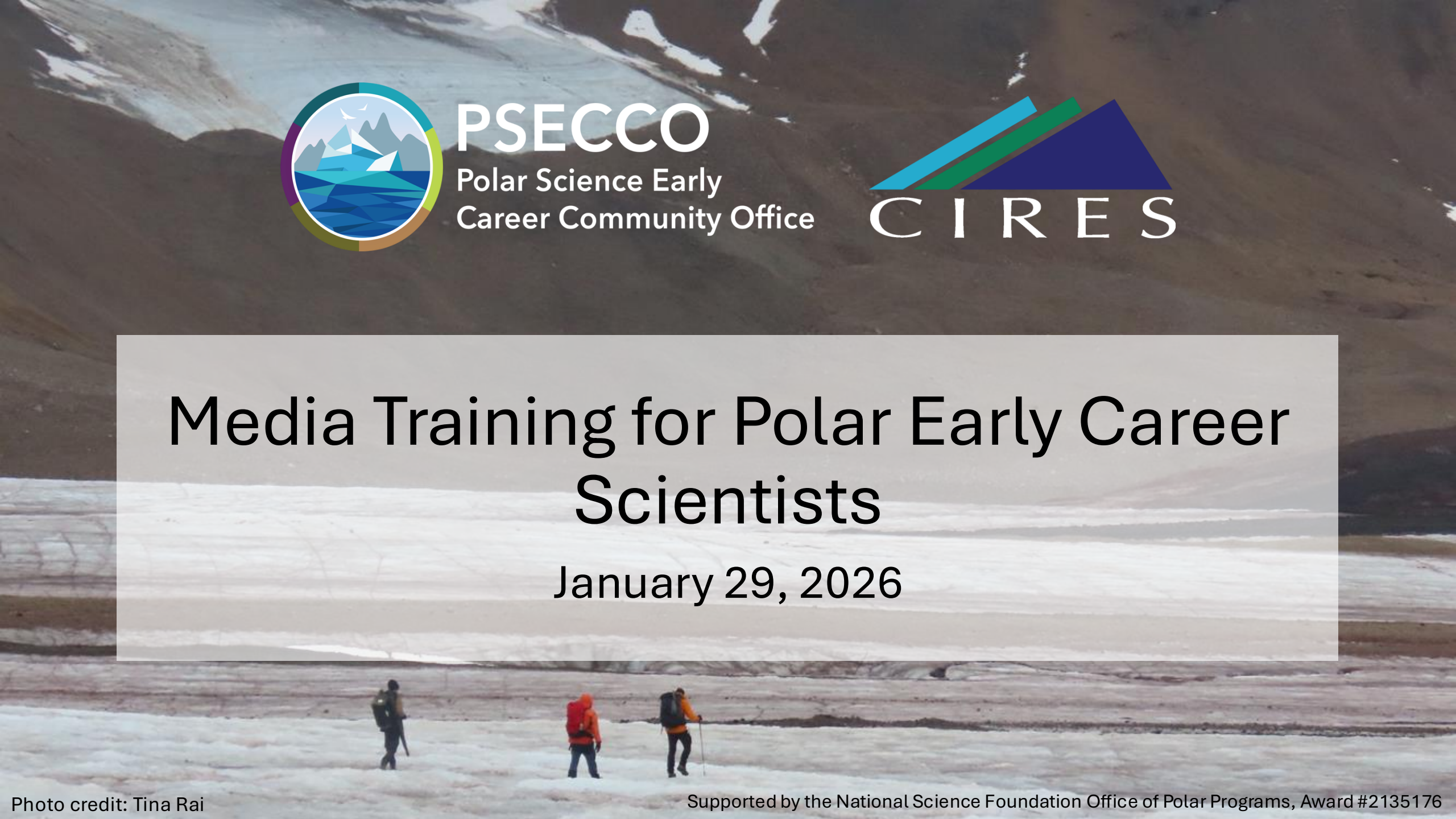

PSECCO
Polar Science Early Career Community Office

CIRES

Media Training for Polar Early Career Scientists

January 29, 2026

Photo credit: Tina Rai

Supported by the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs, Award #2135176

PSECCO
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CIRES

In this space, we agree to…

- Be curious and listen to understand
- Show respect and suspend judgement
- Strive to make space for others to speak, especially the quieter voices and those with different viewpoints from our own
- Consider how our social and institutional positionality may affect the impact of what we say and our awareness of what the potential impact may be
- Look for opportunities to build/expand on ideas with others; acknowledge common ground as well as differences
- Be purposeful and to the point
- Advocate if we feel like an unsafe space has been created

With thanks to Becca Edwards, Bec Batchelor, the CU Inclusive Community of Practice, and Living Room Conversations for ideas for these guidelines

Land acknowledgement

Photo credit: Clément Cherblanc

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CIRES

Overview of the Call

- PSECCO introductions & welcome
- Lauren Lipuma presents
- 5-minute Q&A session

Photo credit: Ellie Miller

Supported by the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs, Award #2135176

PSECCO
Polar Science Early Career Community Office

CIRES

Meet our speaker

Lauren Lipuma is a member of the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) Communications team at the University of Colorado Boulder. She has a background in engineering but has been a science communicator for over ten years, focusing mostly on writing, editing, graphic design, and video production. Lauren has extensive experience getting science results placed in local, national, and international media outlets, and she has trained dozens of scientists on how to communicate their work clearly and effectively.

Photo credit: Lesley Anderson

Supported by the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs, Award #2135176

Working with the media

Lauren Lipuma, CIRES Communications

January 29, 2026

CIRES University of Colorado Boulder NOAA

Agenda

- Goals for today
- What makes science newsworthy
- Before the interview
- During the interview
- After the interview
- Activity!
- Resources and more info

Goals and polls

To get you all more comfortable with doing media interviews and to familiarize you all with the process

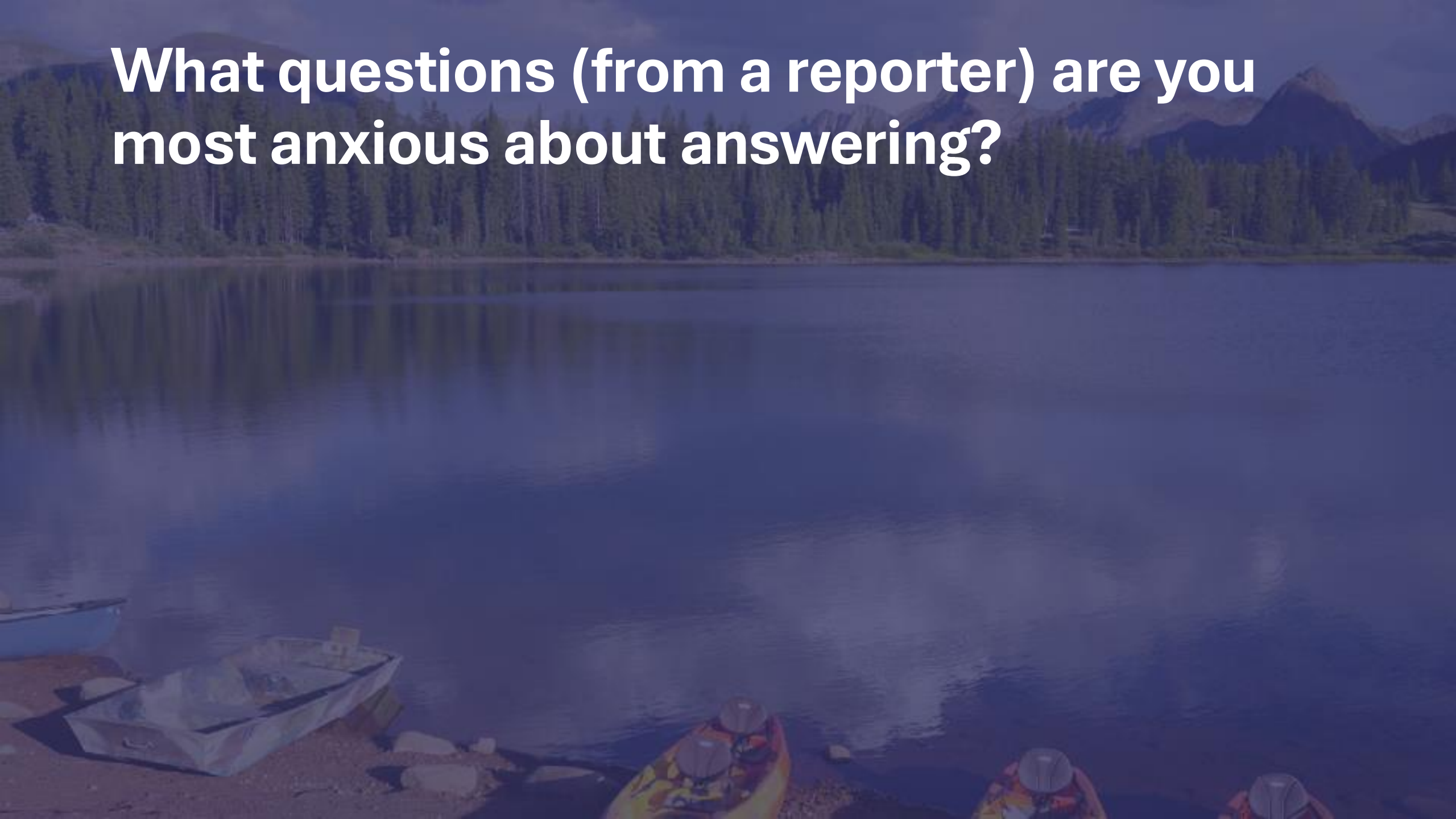
Poll questions: **PollEv.com/laurenlipuma395**

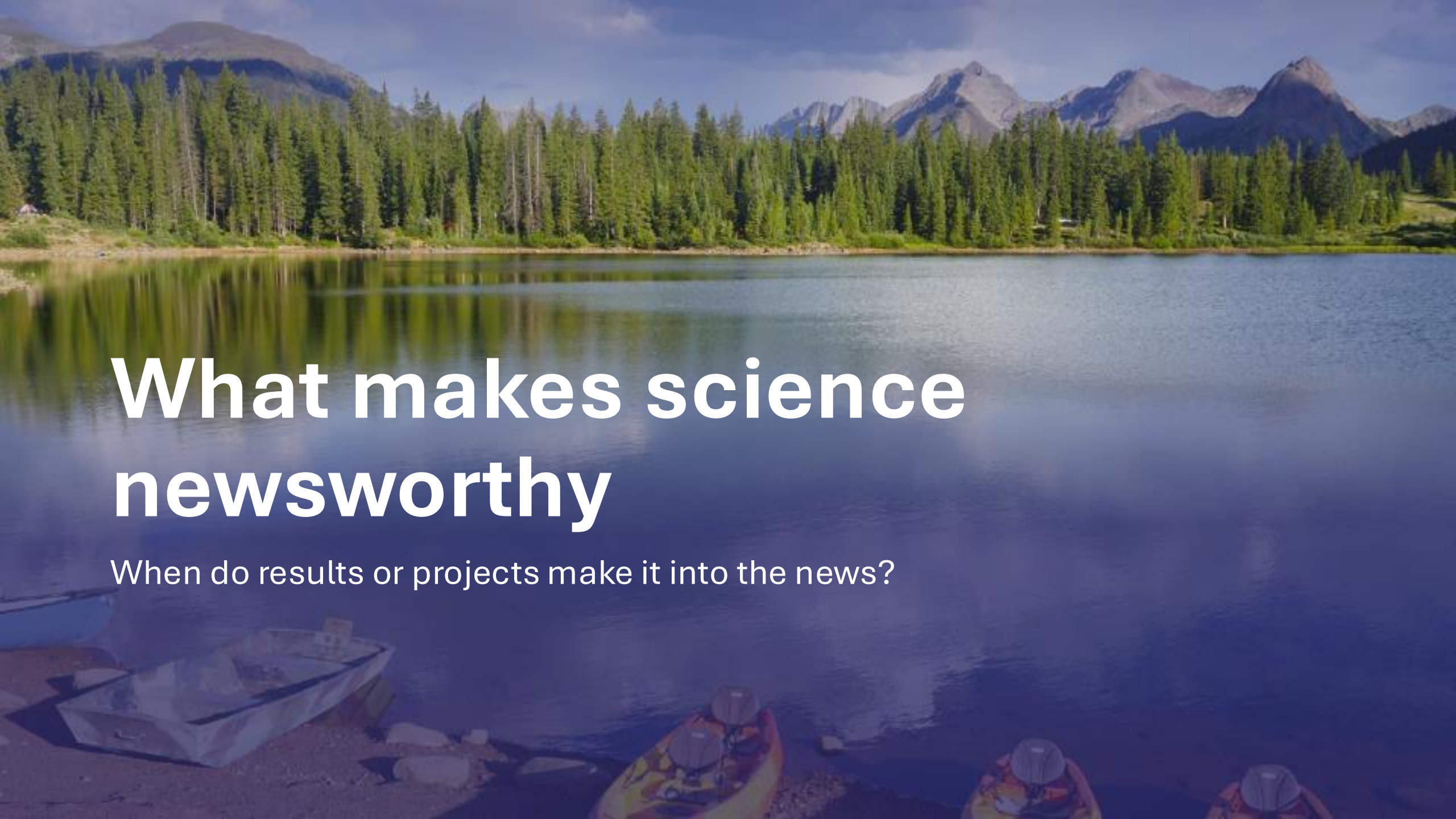
Have you worked with the media before?

What words describe your experience working with the media?

What questions do you have about working with the media?

What questions (from a reporter) are you most anxious about answering?





What makes science newsworthy

When do results or projects make it into the news?

Newsworthiness: General criteria

- New
- Timely
- Significant
- Local
- Odd or unusual
- Has human interest
- Superlatives (first, best, oldest, longest)

Newsworthiness: Science results

- New!
- Discoveries
- Unusual or counterintuitive
- Significantly advance the field
- Relate to current events, landmarks, history
- Impact our lives
- Change our understanding of the universe
- Appeal to the senses
- Establish a new record
- Superlatives
- Fun, weird

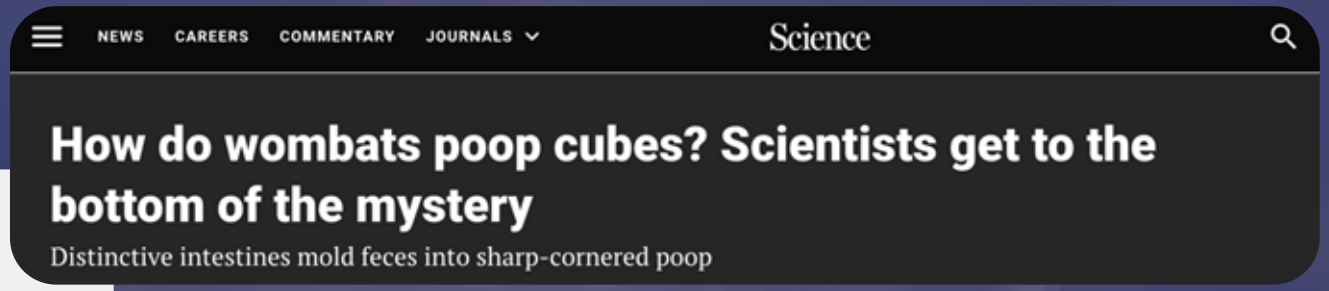
But remember…

Imagine someone's emotional reaction to the news

Awe
Curiosity piqued
Gee whiz
Solved mysteries
New record
Weird, odd things

Amusement
Humor
Appeal to senses

Anxiety/Anger
Negative impact on our lives
Controversy
Unsolved mysteries



When are results NOT newsy

Incremental advances

Modeling results

Improvements of models, techniques

Confirming what is already known

Summarizing the latest in a field

Already been reported

No correlation between variables (a non-story)

What to do if you have new(sy?) results

Contact CIRES Communications! Work with your comms/press office.
cirescomms@colorado.edu

Tell us **before** your paper is published

Let us know if you're interested in being an on-call expert

Challenge! What is even going on here?

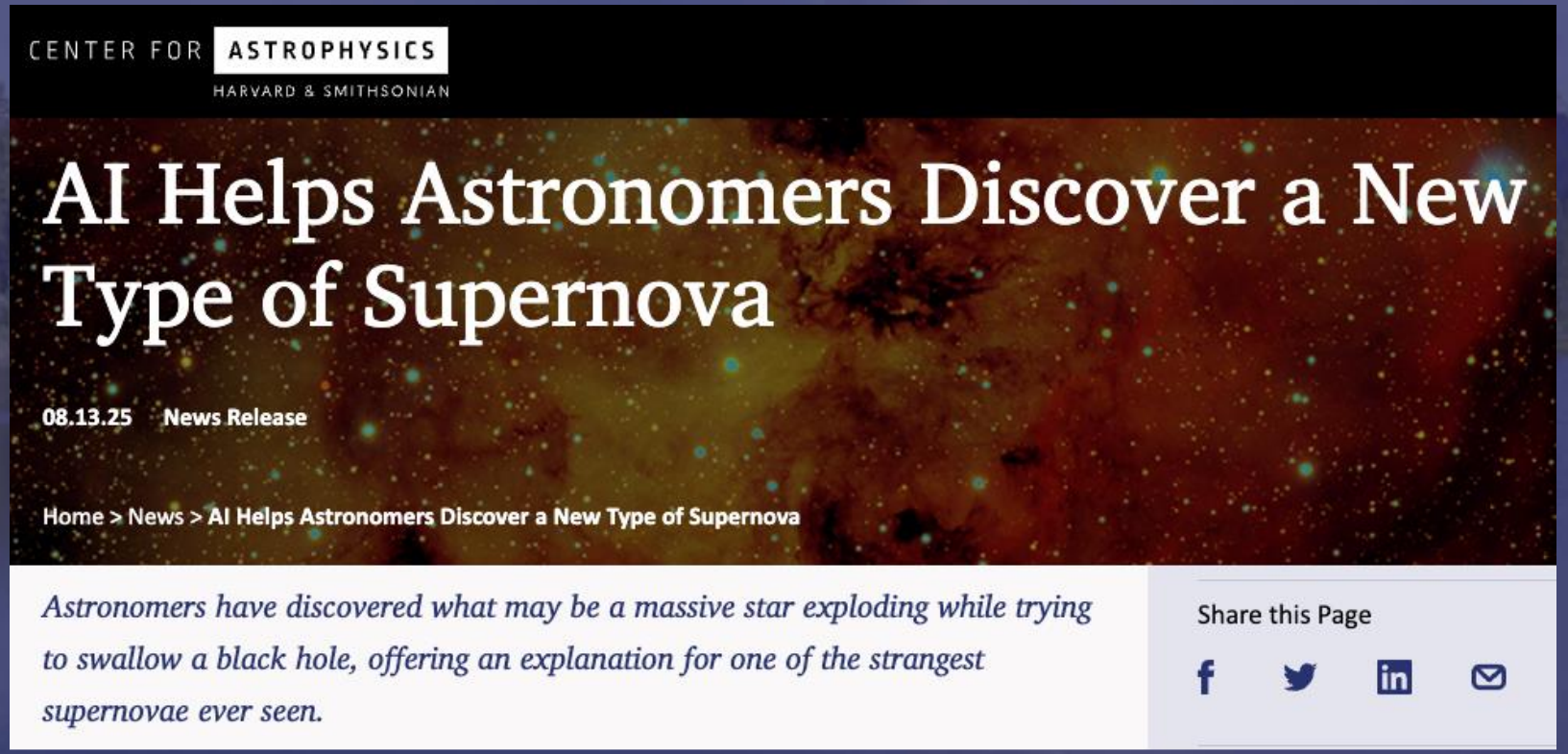
Paper title: Evidence for an Instability-induced Binary Merger in the Double-peaked, Helium-rich Type IIn Supernova 2023zkd

https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.3847/1538-4357/adea38

Why can’t we figure out what this is about or if it’s newsy?

Our only clue: “[We] find that the brightening optical precursor and inferred explosion properties are most consistent with a massive and partially stripped He star undergoing an instability-induced merger with a black hole companion.”

This is actually very newsy…

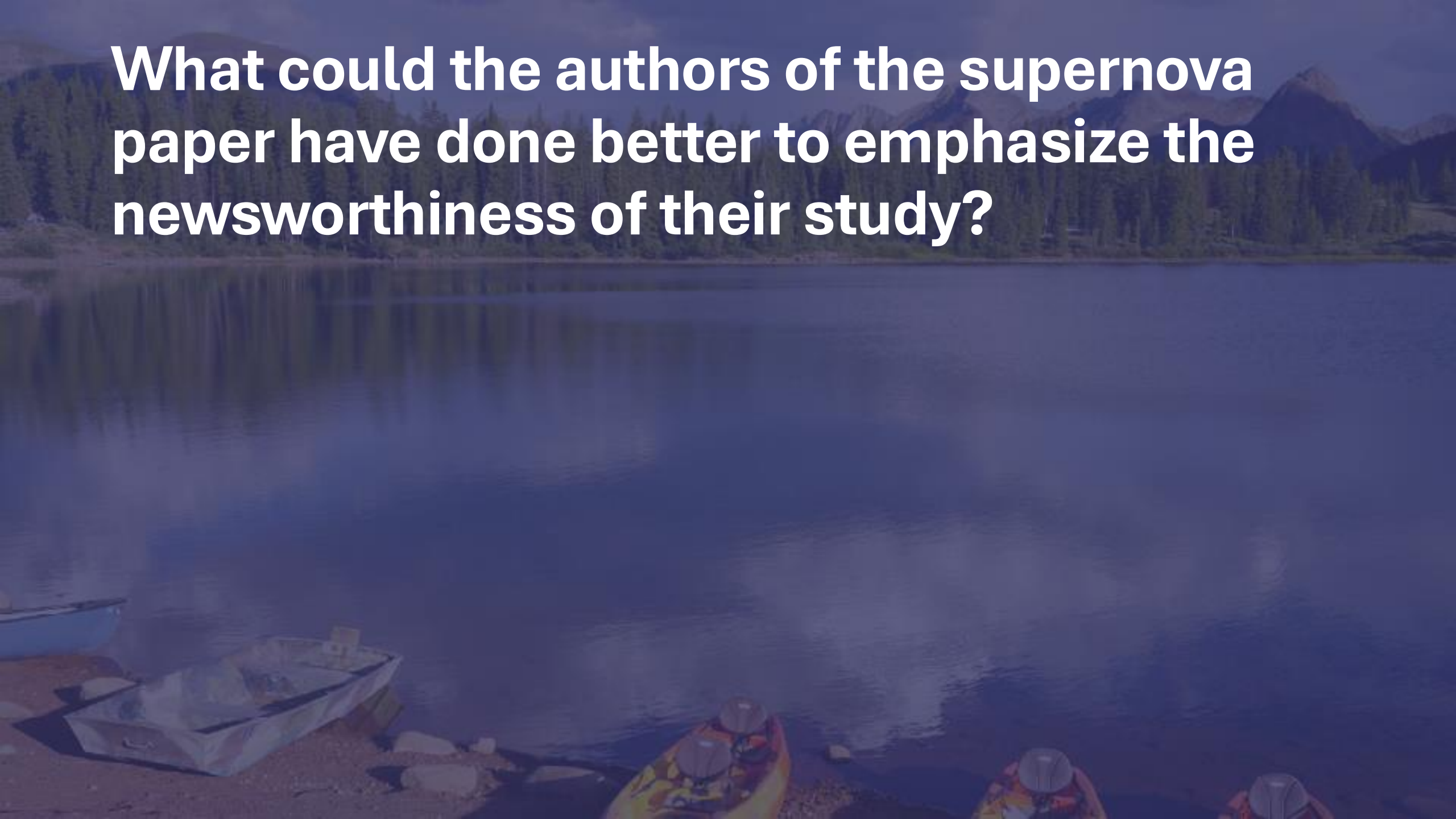


Quote from lead author: "Our analysis shows that the blast was sparked by a catastrophic encounter with a black hole companion, and is the strongest evidence to date that such close interactions can actually detonate a star."

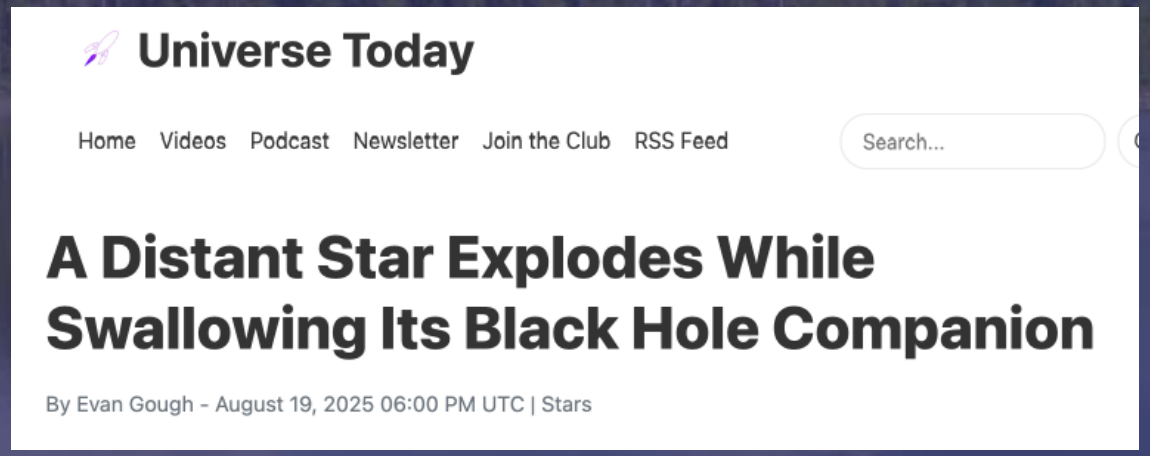
What could the paper authors have done better in their title and abstract?

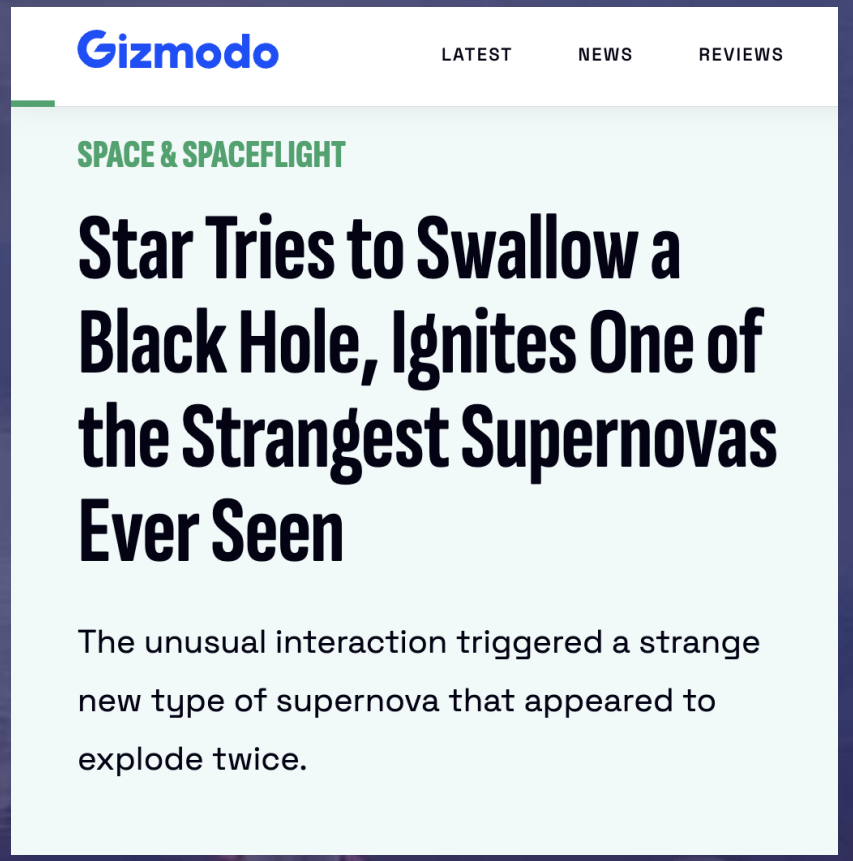
PollEv.com/laurenlipuma395

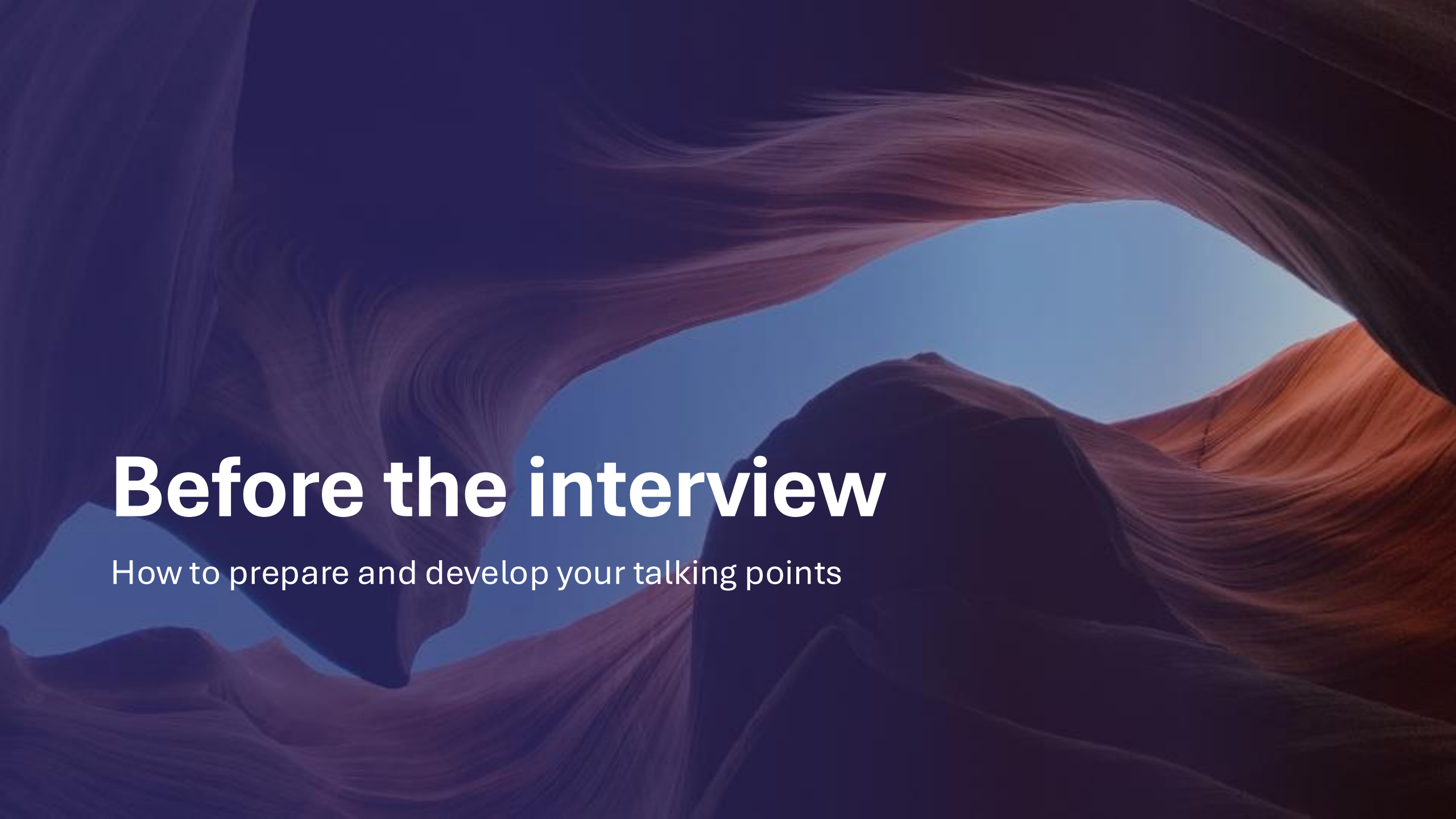
What could the authors of the supernova paper have done better to emphasize the newsworthiness of their study?



Actual headlines







Before the interview

How to prepare and develop your talking points

Logistics and considerations

Logistics

Let your comms team know!

Call them back if you need time (take your time but respect deadlines)

Prepare your talking points in advance

What can/can’t you talk about?

✅ Your science, the topic/field in general

✅ Potential solutions, policies

✅ Things that affect you or your work specifically

❌ Your university or institution’s business (personnel, finances, etc.)

❌ How politics/decisions affect your institution/university

First: Prepare your talking points

Distill your work for a general audience

Why?

To be clear, consistent, and concise

To give you more control over how the research is portrayed

To minimize ambiguity and misunderstanding

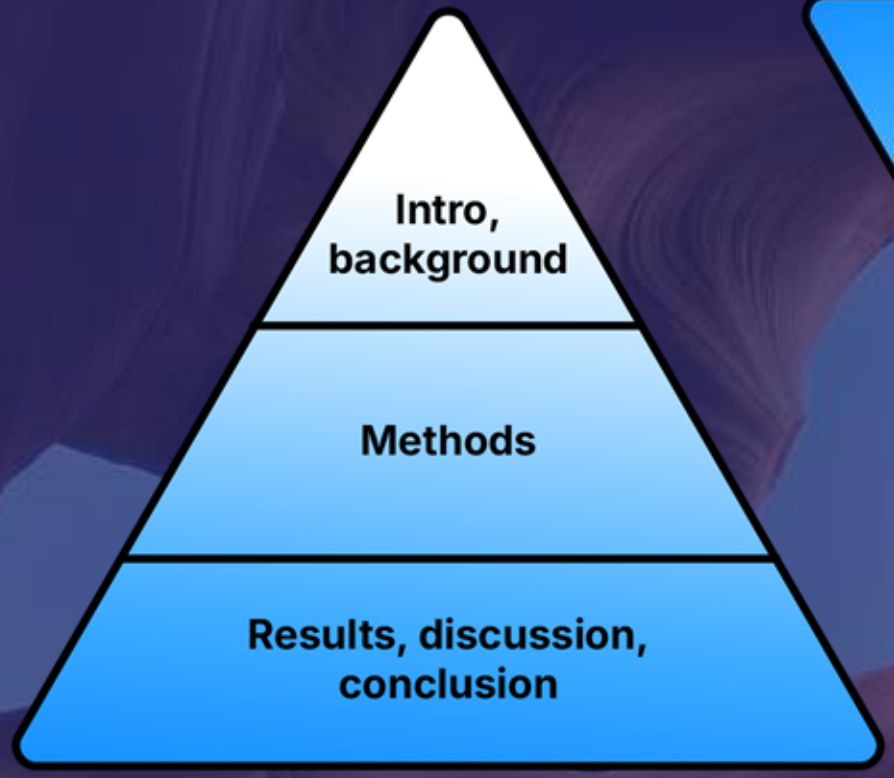
To ensure the reporter retains your key messages

Lauren's three principles for preparing talking points

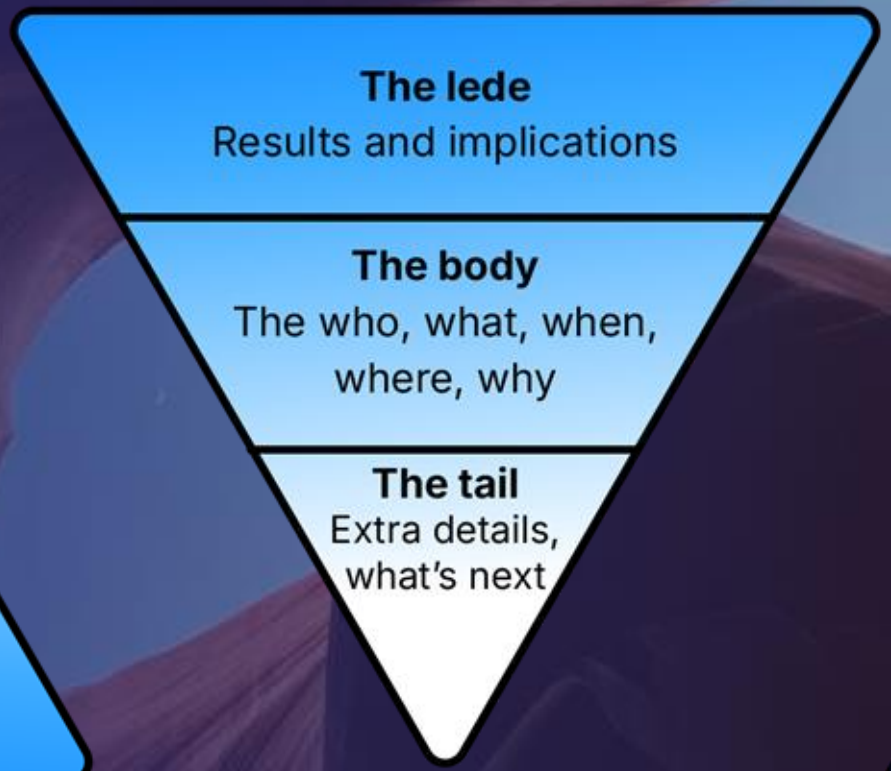
1. Remember the gist
2. Break it down into discrete chunks
3. Make it meaningful

1. Remember the gist

Academic vs. news style



Academic style



News style

The hourglass

An example from Nora Ephron

What's the gist here? What would you tell parents of students at this school?

"Kenneth L chool, announced cramento next Thurs ds. Among the speake lege president F ernor Jerry Brown."

No school next Thursday!!

2. Break it into discrete chunks

How to structure your talking points

Definitions – things to include in your talking points

News (Results; the who, what, when, where, why of the study)

Impact (Why do we care?)

Context (Is this result special? How does it relate to previous results?)

Human dimension (How does this affect people?)

Talking point structure

1. What we know (background)
2. What is new (the news)
3. Why it matters (impact, context, human dimension)
4. Take-home message (summary)

3. Make it meaningful

Focus on meaning rather than detail

Think product overview vs. tech specs

Use keywords to demonstrate impact/importance

Provide context

Unnecessary detail

Key Features

- 32.5MP Full-Frame CMOS Sensor
- Open Gate 7K 30p, High-Speed 4K 120p
- Up to 40 fps & Pre-Continuous Shoot Mode
- 3.69m-Dot OLED EVF with OVF View Assist
- CFexpress & SD UHS-II Memory Card Slots
- 7K 60p 12-Bit Internal RAW Light Video
- Dual Pixel CMOS AF II & Movie Servo AF
- 8.5-Stop 5-Axis Image Stabilization
- 3" 1.62m-Dot Vari-Angle Touchscreen LCD
- Multi-Function Shoe, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth

Meaningful info

Canon R6 Mark III Overview

By B&H Photo's
Bjorn Petersen >

The Super Hybrid

Built to be the high-performance all-arounder for creatives who work in both photo and video, the **Canon EOS R6 Mark III** deftly combines an array of hybrid capabilities, upgraded imaging, and revised handling and design to suit shooters working in a wide variety of scenarios.

Make it meaningful

Show why we should care

Emphasize the value of your work

End on a positive note when you can

Use examples relevant to people's lives

Connect your work to things people already care about

"Environmental research is so important because…"

"We have the opportunity to safeguard our water resources for generations to come …"

"Residents of [x location] can use our results to advocate for better air quality…"

"Our work improving weather forecasts better protects lives and property from the ravages of severe weather."

Other tips for success

Remember who your audience is

What is most important and meaningful to a non-scientist?

Use plain language as much as you can

Make it fun

Add some of your personality! Be yourself

Use metaphors, stories, social math, etc.

Craft some sound bites

“Thwaites is really holding on today by its fingernails, and we should expect to see big changes over small timescales in the future.”

“Ten years ago, the Arctic was whispering. Now, it’s screaming.”

Need more help? Ask yourself these questions

- What are the 1-3 things you want the reporter to take away from the interview?
- How do your results compare to previous findings?
- What did you do in this study that hasn’t been done before?
- What are the benefits of your science to to society at large? What compelling numbers or examples emphasize the impact of your work?
- Do you have an example, anecdote, story, or metaphor to explain your work?
- Do you have a request to make of the audience? What opportunities for action are there?

Second: Practice!

- Speak your messages/talking points aloud multiple times
- Role-play with a friend or colleague
- Anticipate what might be contentious or controversial
- Think about what questions someone might ask
- Practice pivoting back to your main messages if the conversation goes off topic
- Avoid getting bogged down in the weeds

- **BONUS**: Try incorporating these techniques into your paper writing

A recent example

News

Hektoria Glacier retreated rapidly in 2022 and lost nearly half of its mass in just two months. New satellite data shows the glacier rests on a large, flat plain of bedrock, and this topography is what allowed it to retreat very quickly after large waves broke up the sea ice holding it in place.

Impact

Hektoria Glacier is small, but a similar rapid retreat on larger Antarctic glaciers could have catastrophic implications for global sea level rise.

Context

In the past, Antarctic glaciers with ice plains retreated hundreds of meters per day, so Hektoria's retreat is not unique, but it was the fastest in modern history. Climate change is making such fast glacier retreats more likely.

Human dimension

We need to get serious about planning for glacier loss and sea level rise to minimize the impact on vulnerable people and communities.

Talking points

What we know

Antarctic glaciers are melting and speeding up due to climate change. Hektoria Glacier retreated rapidly in 2022 and lost nearly half of its mass in just two months. Although glaciers in the past have retreated rapidly, Hektoria's was the fastest in modern history. This researcher wanted to understand why Hektoria retreated so rapidly.

What is new

Satellite data shows Hektoria Glacier rests on a large, flat plain of bedrock, called an ice plain. This ice plain topography allowed the glacier to retreat very quickly after large waves broke up the sea ice protecting the glacier's floating ice tongue from ocean water.

Talking points

Why it matters

Hektoria Glacier is small, but a similar rapid retreat on larger Antarctic glaciers could have catastrophic implications for global sea level rise. We can use what happened at Hektoria to understand what might happen to other Antarctic glaciers.

Take-home message

We need to better understand the topography underlying large glaciers that are melting due to climate change; we need to get serious about planning for glacier loss and sea level rise to minimize the impact on vulnerable people and communities.

Controversy in this example

Controversy/contention

Other glaciologists disagreed with the findings about the ice plain and where the glacier's grounding zone was located

Key points reinforced by the lead researcher

The earthquakes prove the glacier was grounded; the ice plain topography does explain the other researcher's findings.

During the interview

First, definitions

On the record

Anything you say can be published and attributed to you by name and/or job title

Off the record

Your words cannot be published or attributed to you in any way; they are for the reporter's information only

On background

Your words can be published but not attributed to you by name or job title

By default, any conversation with a journalist is on the record; any request to go off the record requires explicit agreement from the journalist beforehand.

Everything you say, from the moment you pick up the phone until the moment you hang up, is on the record.

Tips for success

- Answer in complete sentences
- Speak slowly and enunciate; take your time
- Smile and gesture when you speak (even for radio)
- Be conversational and be yourself!
- Forgive yourself if you mess up and move on!
- On camera: Wear business casual clothes; no bright prints or patterns
- Avoid negative statements about other researchers and their work
- Use transition statements if the conversation gets off topic
- Recommend outside experts
- Remember: You don’t have to answer every question!

More tips

If you don’t know the answer:

- Refer the reporter to your comms team or another expert
- Offer to find out and get back to them
- Avoid ‘no comment’. Instead, say something like:
  - ‘That’s outside my area of expertise’ or ‘that’s outside the scope of my work’
  - ‘That’s a question best posed to a [policymaker/emergency manager/etc.]…’

If the conversation goes off topic, pivot back to your main messages

- ‘I see where you’re going, but what’s important to remember is….’
- ‘I can’t speculate on that, but what I can tell you is…’
- ‘That’s outside the scope of our work, but what I find exciting is…’

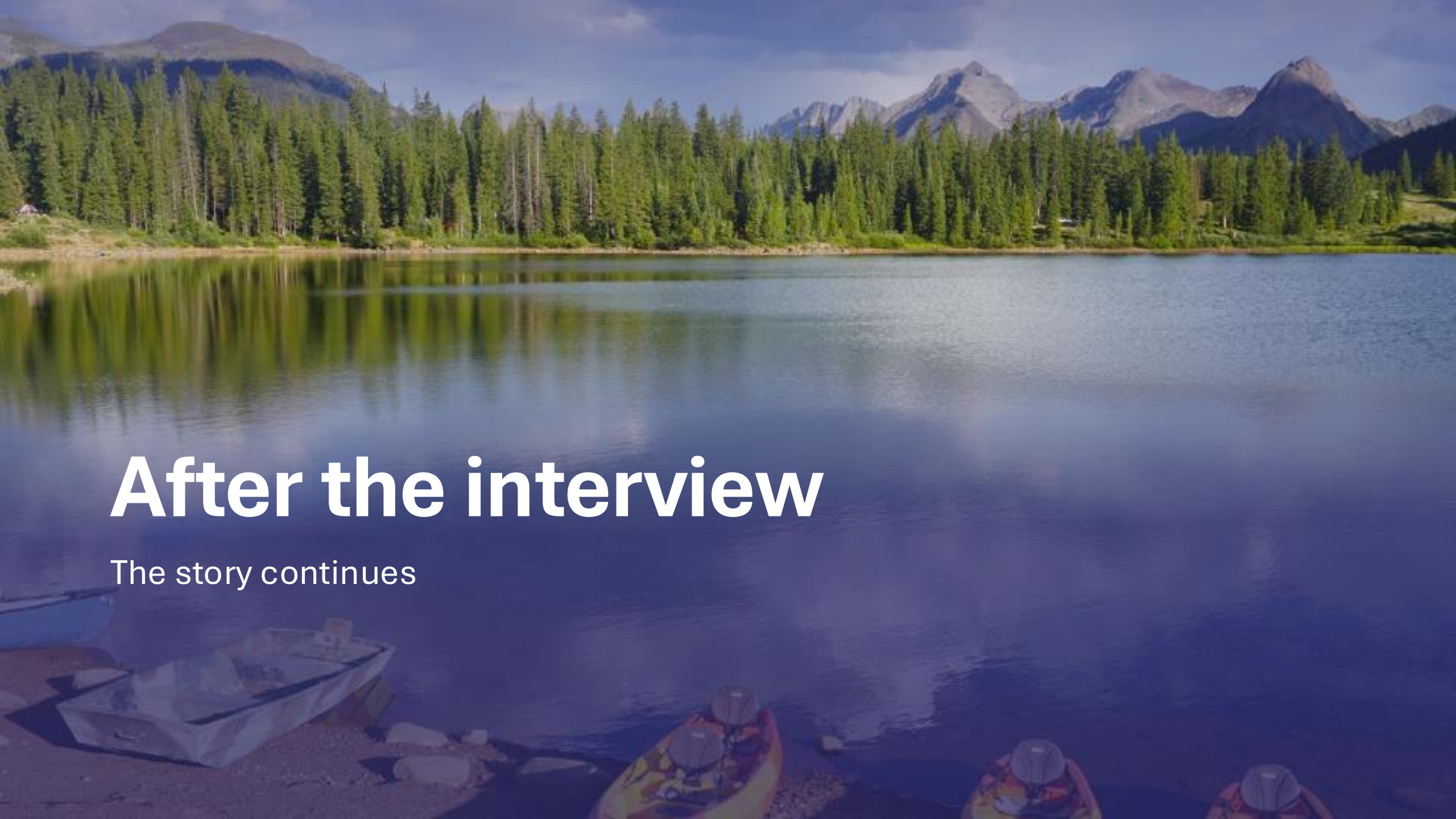
Do’s and Don’ts

DO

- Practice summarizing your work before the interview
- Repeat your key messages
- Be clear, concise, and conversational
- Try to get some good sound bites
- Bridge back to your key messages
- Keep calm and carry on
- **Remember: You’re the expert!**

DON’T

- Be rude, aggressive or sarcastic
- Disparage other scientists or their work
- Use too much jargon
- Speak on behalf of CIRES or CU
- Speak about CIRES or CU business
- Say anything that would damage the reputation of CIRES or CU



After the interview

The story continues

Keep communication going

Offer to follow up, help fact check

Build a relationship with the journalist

Invite them on a tour of your lab or on a field trip (talk to comms first)

Things to keep in mind

Can’t review story before it’s published

There is no acknowledgements section

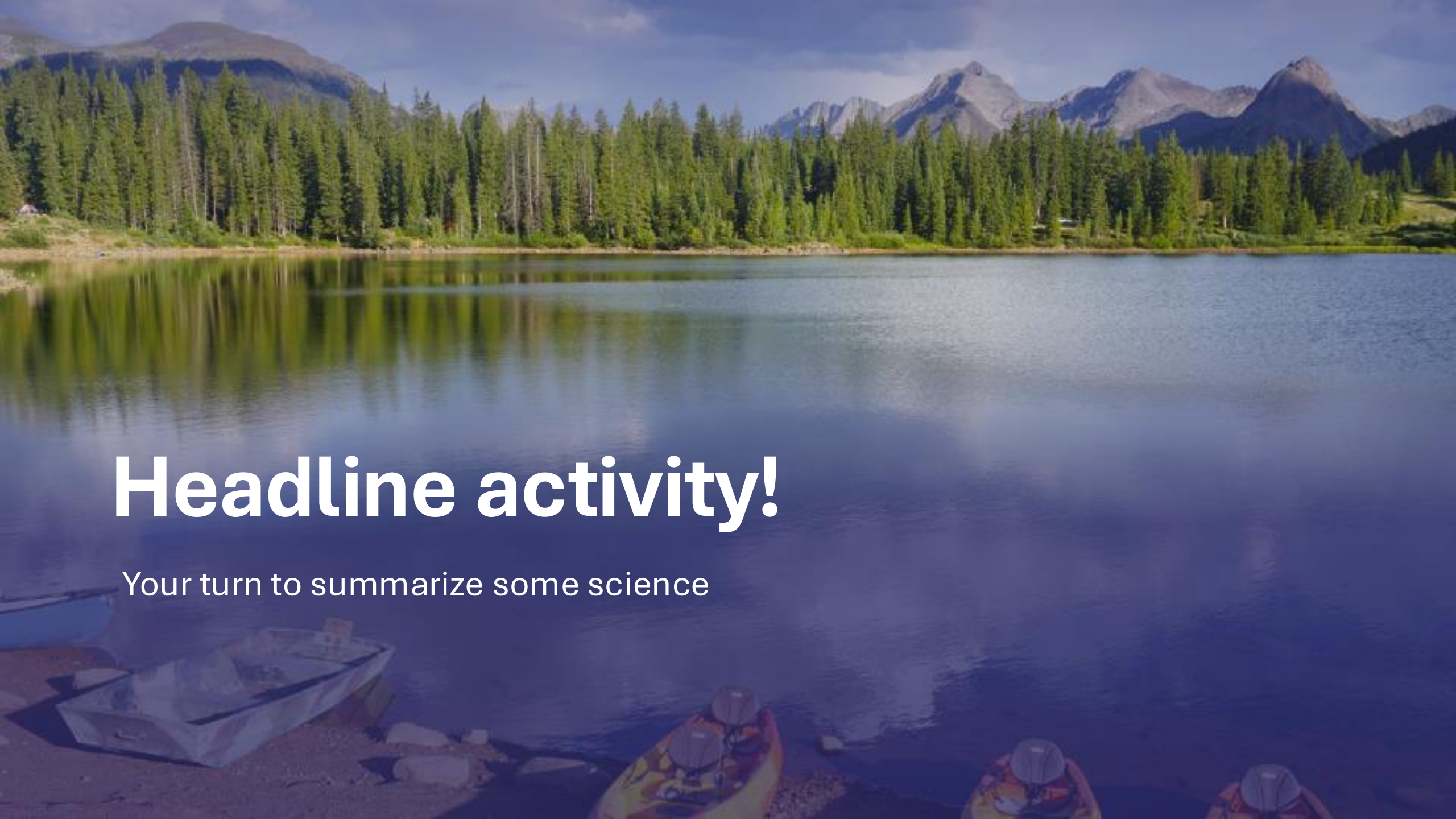
Mistakes happen

Accept artistic license

Everything has a length limit

How to help journalists get it right

- Work with your comms office!
- Prepare your messages in advance
- Practice summarizing your work with non-scientists
- Be as clear as possible!
- Be an on-call expert
- Build a relationship with journalists who cover your work frequently
- Use the techniques I've described here when writing your paper!!



Headline activity!

Your turn to summarize some science

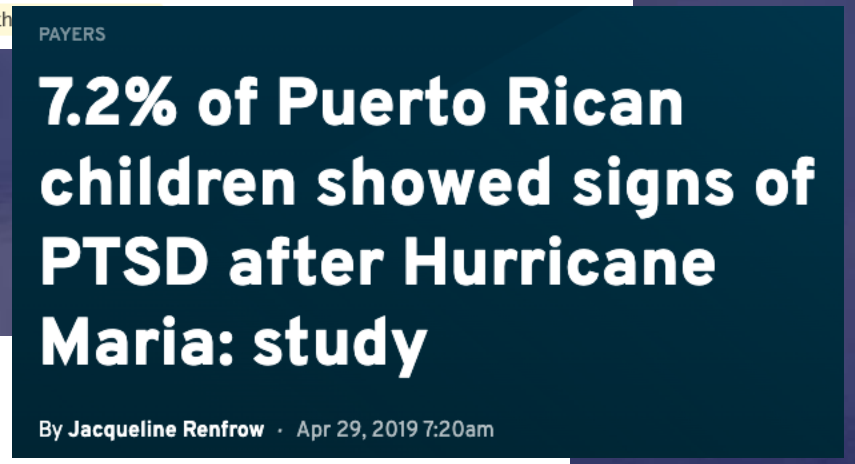
What is a headline?

A headline is:

- A declarative statement summarizing the research results (and sometimes the implications)

A *good* headline is:

- Clear
- Specific
- Concise
- Clever (a little)



A headline is an answer, not a question

Geophysical Research Letters

Research Letter | Free Access

The Carr Fire Vortex: A Case of Pyrotornadogenesis?

N. P. Lareau, N. J. Nauslar, J. T. Abatzoglou

First published: 21 November 2018 | https://doi.org/10.1029/2018GL080667 | VIEW METRICS

This article was corrected on 15 APR 2019. See the end of the full text for details.

ScienceNewsExplores

CLIMATE

California's Carr Fire spawned a true fire tornado

Not a common fire-whirl, these are amazingly rare freaks of nature

Earth's Future

Research Article | Open Access

Will Individual Actions Do the Trick? Comparing Climate Change Mitigation Through Geoengineering Versus Reduced Vehicle Emissions

Emily G. Murray, Andrea L. DiGiorgio

First published: 06 February 2021 | https://doi.org/10.1029/2020EF001734 | VIEW METRICS

Eos

ABOUT SECTIONS TOPICS PROJECTS SCIENCE POLICY TRACKER BLOGS NEWSLETTER SUBMIT TO *EOS*

Carbon Capture Can't Solve the Climate Problem Without Individual Actions

What does a headline do?

A headline should:

- Capture the research results
- Explain what is new, unusual, or surprising
- Lead to a reaction
  - Awe
  - Amusement
  - Anxiety/anger

POPULAR MECHANICS

Science > Animals

Animals Keep Evolving Into Crabs, Which Is Somewhat Disturbing

It's okay if this weirds you out.

BY CAROLINE DELBERT PUBLISHED: DEC 09, 2025 2:42 PM EST

The New York Times

Lemon-Shaped World Is the Most Stretched-Out Planet Ever Seen

An unusual object orbiting a rapidly spinning star might be a new phenomenon in the universe.

Your turn to be a journalist!

Come up with 1-3 possible headlines for the following research summaries

Your goal:

- Capture the research results
- Be clear, concise, specific, and clever
- Write a statement, not a question

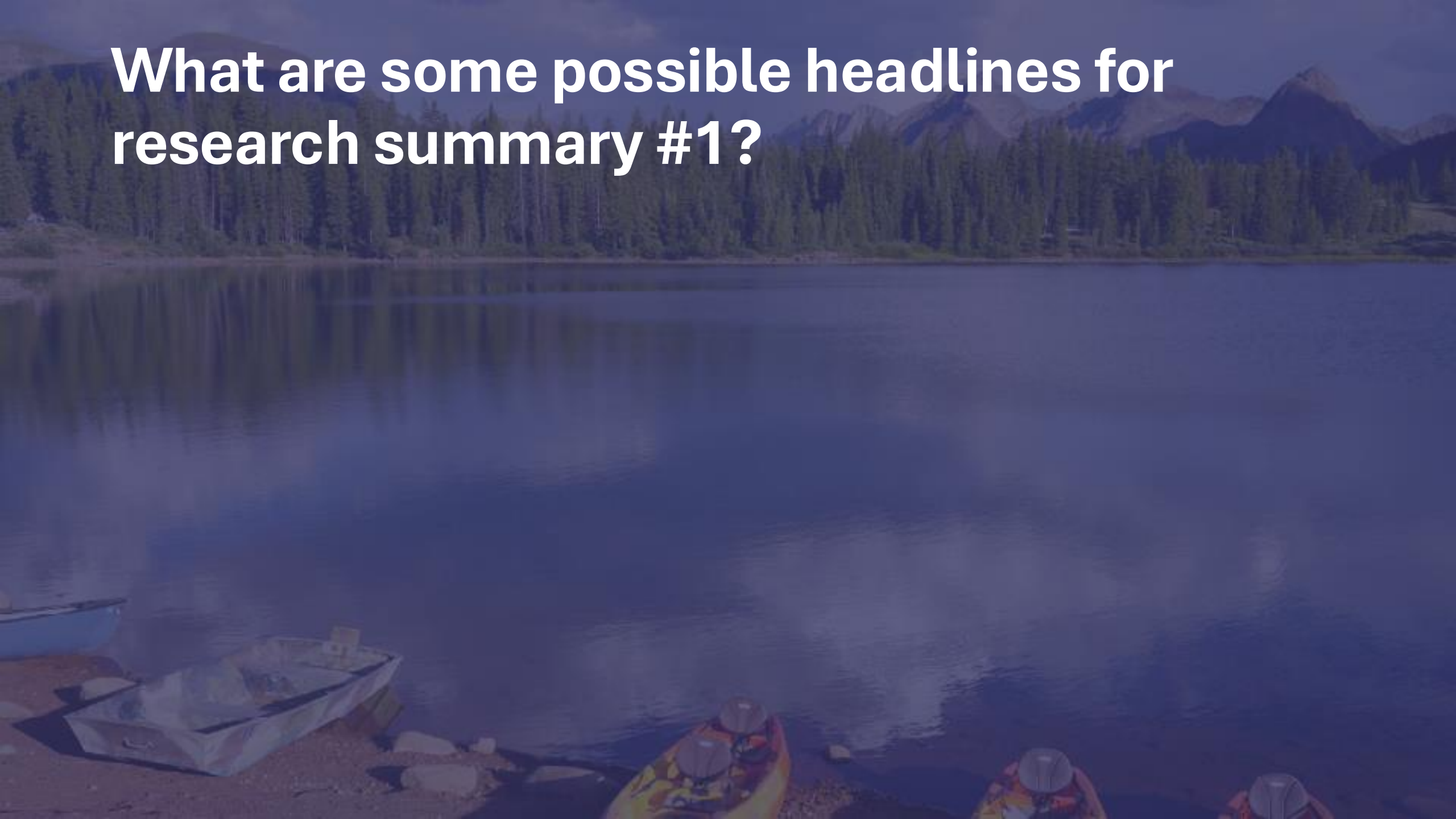
Record responses here: **PollEv.com/laurenlipuma395**

Research summary #1

Title: Initiation of the biogenic conditions on the early Earth: Implications for habitability of Earth-like exoplanets

Summary: We apply observational data, sophisticated theoretical models, and laboratory experiment data to show that the rise of habitability of the early Earth, Mars and Earth-like exoplanets can be attributed to the explosive events from the young Sun.

What are some possible headlines for research summary #1?



Research summary #1: Actual headlines

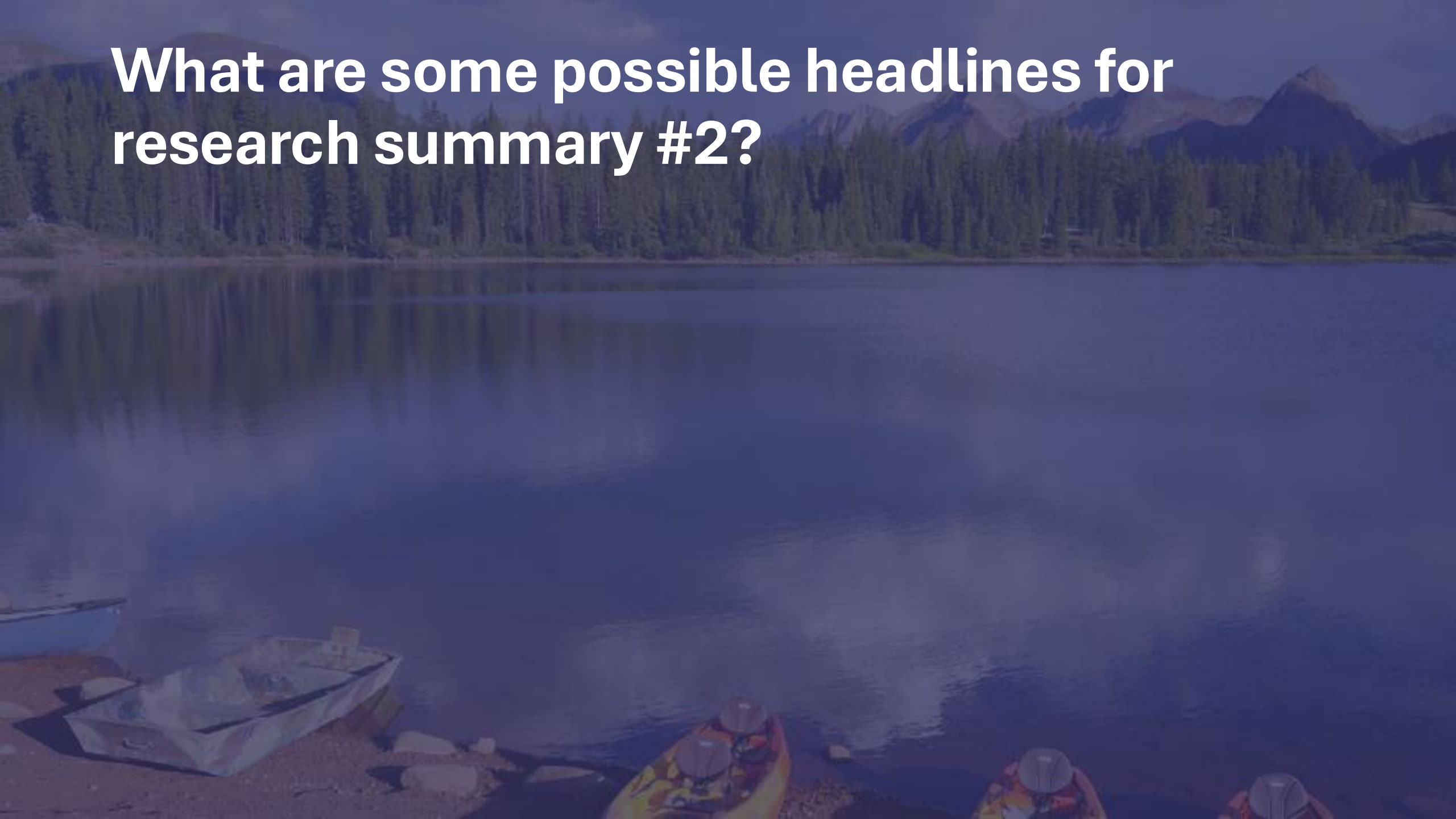
Title: Initiation of the biogenic conditions on the early Earth: Implications for habitability of Earth-like exoplanets

Research summary #2

Title: How Uranus fell over: Consequences of giant impacts with high-resolution simulations

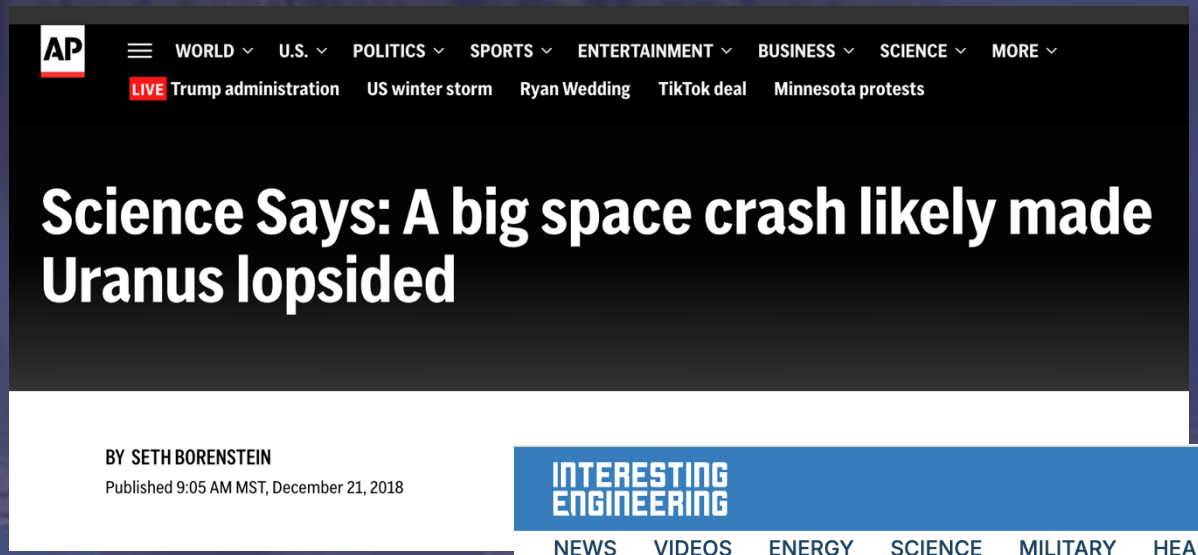
Summary: We have performed a suite of simulations to investigate in detail the results of a giant impact on the young Uranus. We find this cataclysmic event could explain Uranus' remarkable 98-degree tilt and we also study the internal structure, atmospheric retention, and orbiting debris of the post-impact planet.

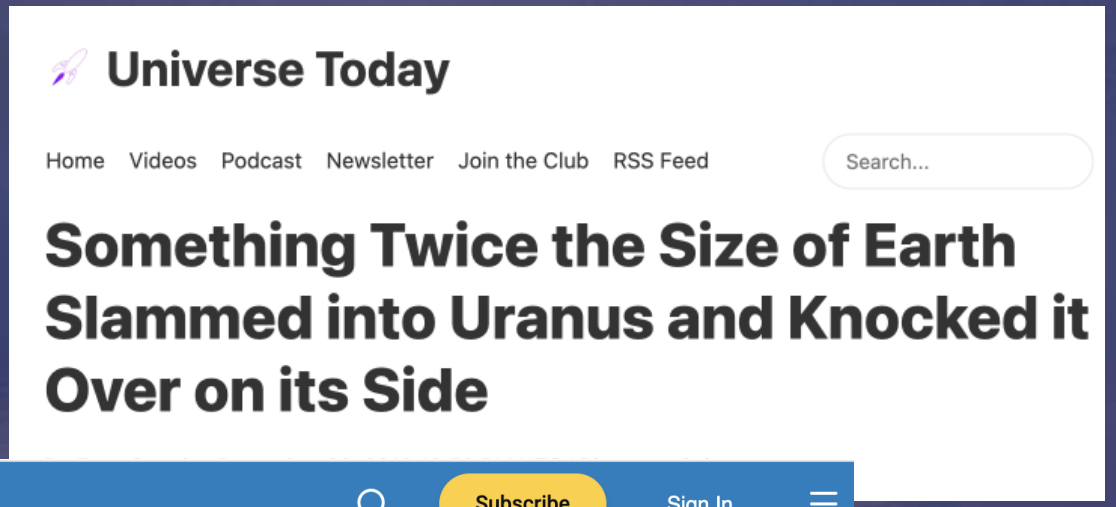
What are some possible headlines for research summary #2?



Research summary #2: Actual headlines

Title: How Uranus fell over: Consequences of giant impacts with high-resolution simulations



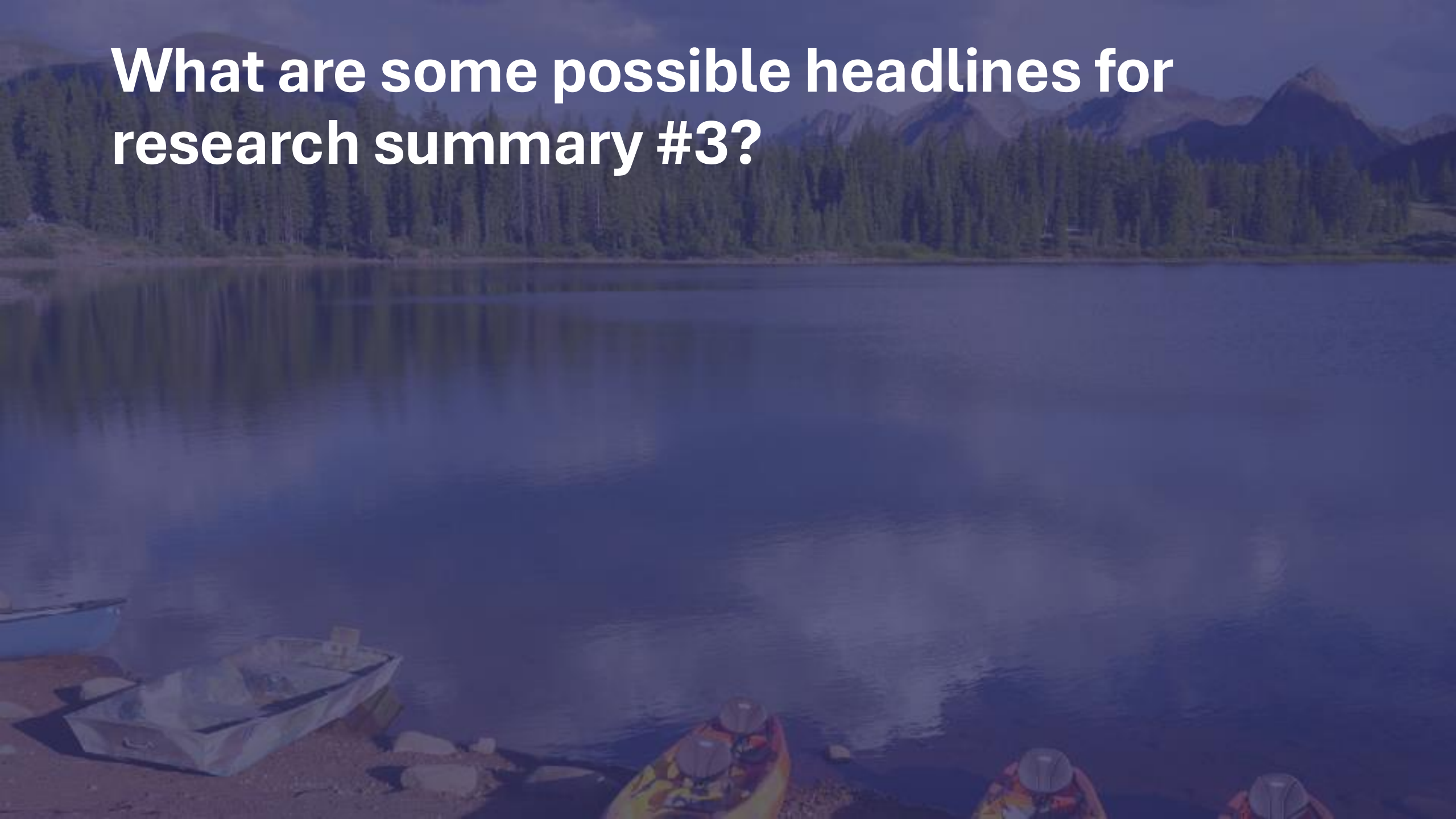


Research summary #3

Title: Rapid-scan mobile radar observations of tornado formation

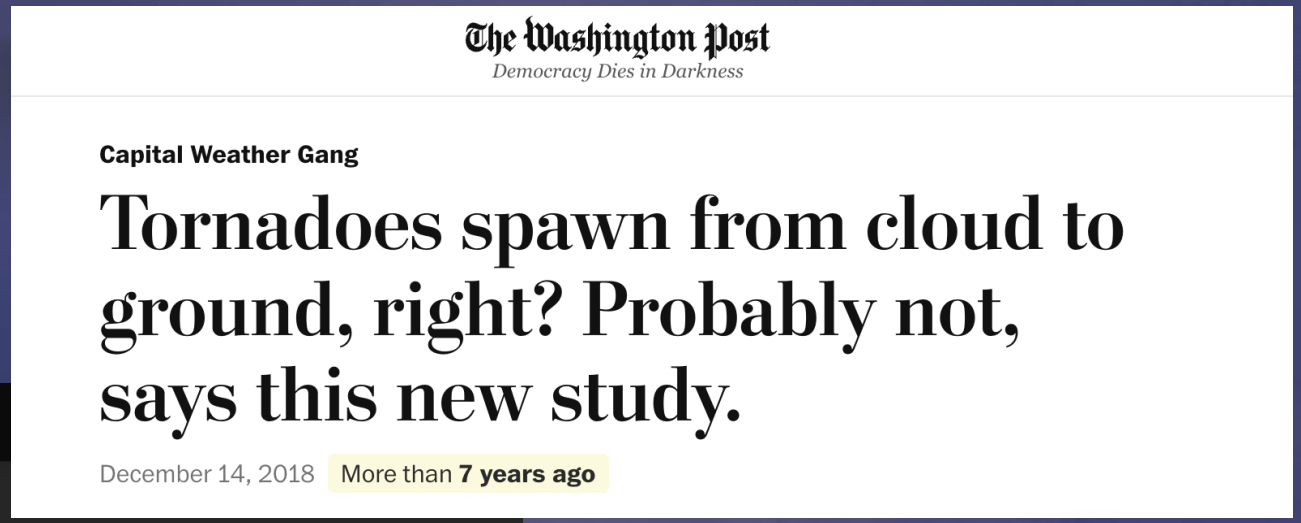
Summary: Historically, the generally accepted hypothesis surrounding tornado formation in supercell thunderstorms is that strong rotation develops at the cloud level, followed by progressively strengthening rotation at lower heights until the rotating column intersects the ground, contracts, and forms a tornado. Here, we show that this hypothesis is likely incorrect. Instead, it appears that in many cases, tornado rotation develops at near-ground levels first and travels upward into the atmosphere.

What are some possible headlines for research summary #3?



Research summary #3: Actual headlines

Title: Rapid-scan mobile radar observations of tornado formation

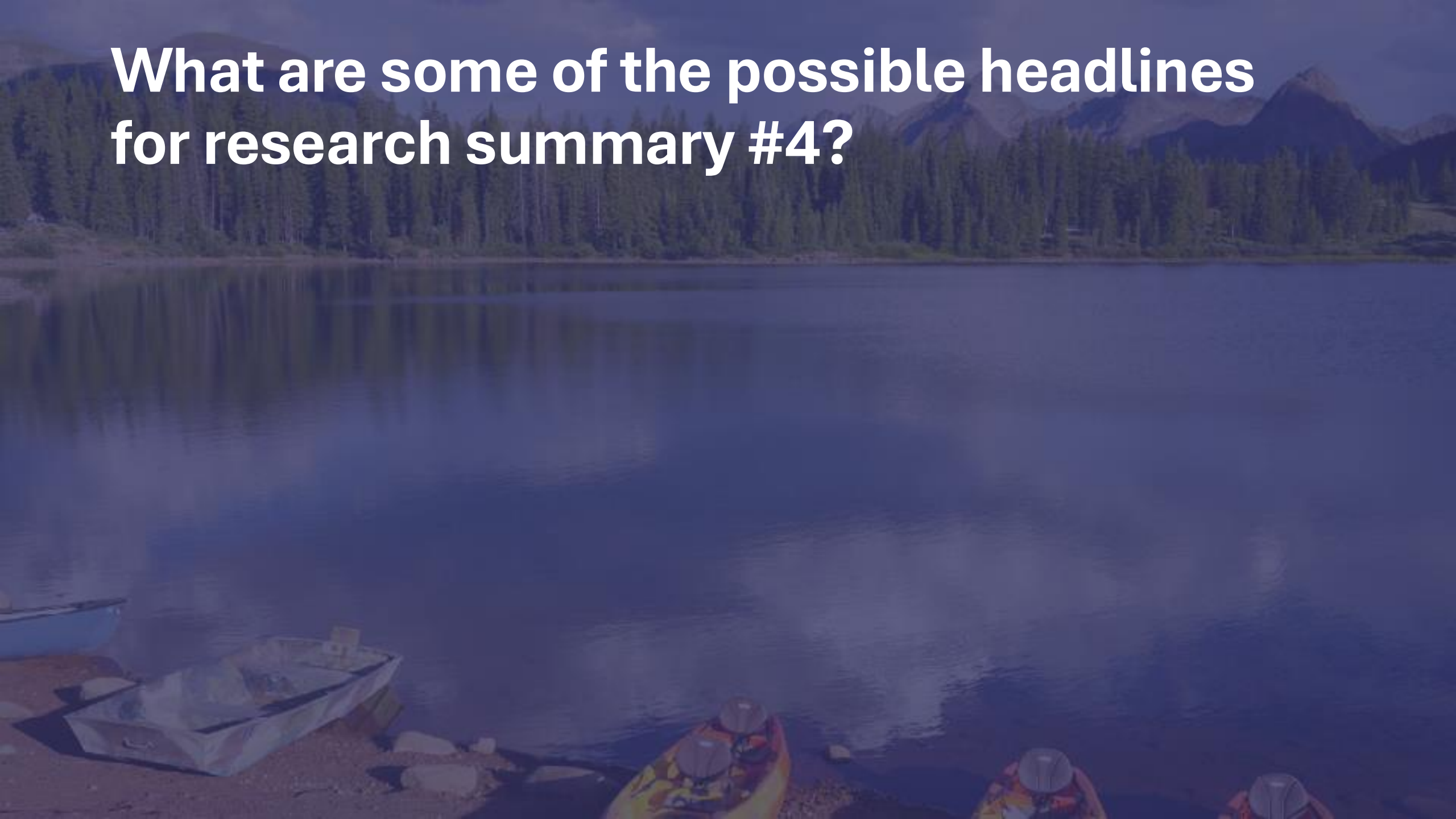


Research summary #4

Title: Hadal trenches: Ultimate sink for microplastics

Summary: Plastic debris and microplastics originating from land are dispersed in the ocean at an alarming speed and scale. Here, we find surprisingly high evidence of microplastics in sediments from deep seafloor and deep ocean trenches located in the Pacific Ocean, including the Mariana Trench, home to the deepest point on Earth’s surface.

What are some of the possible headlines for research summary #4?



Research summary #4: Actual headlines

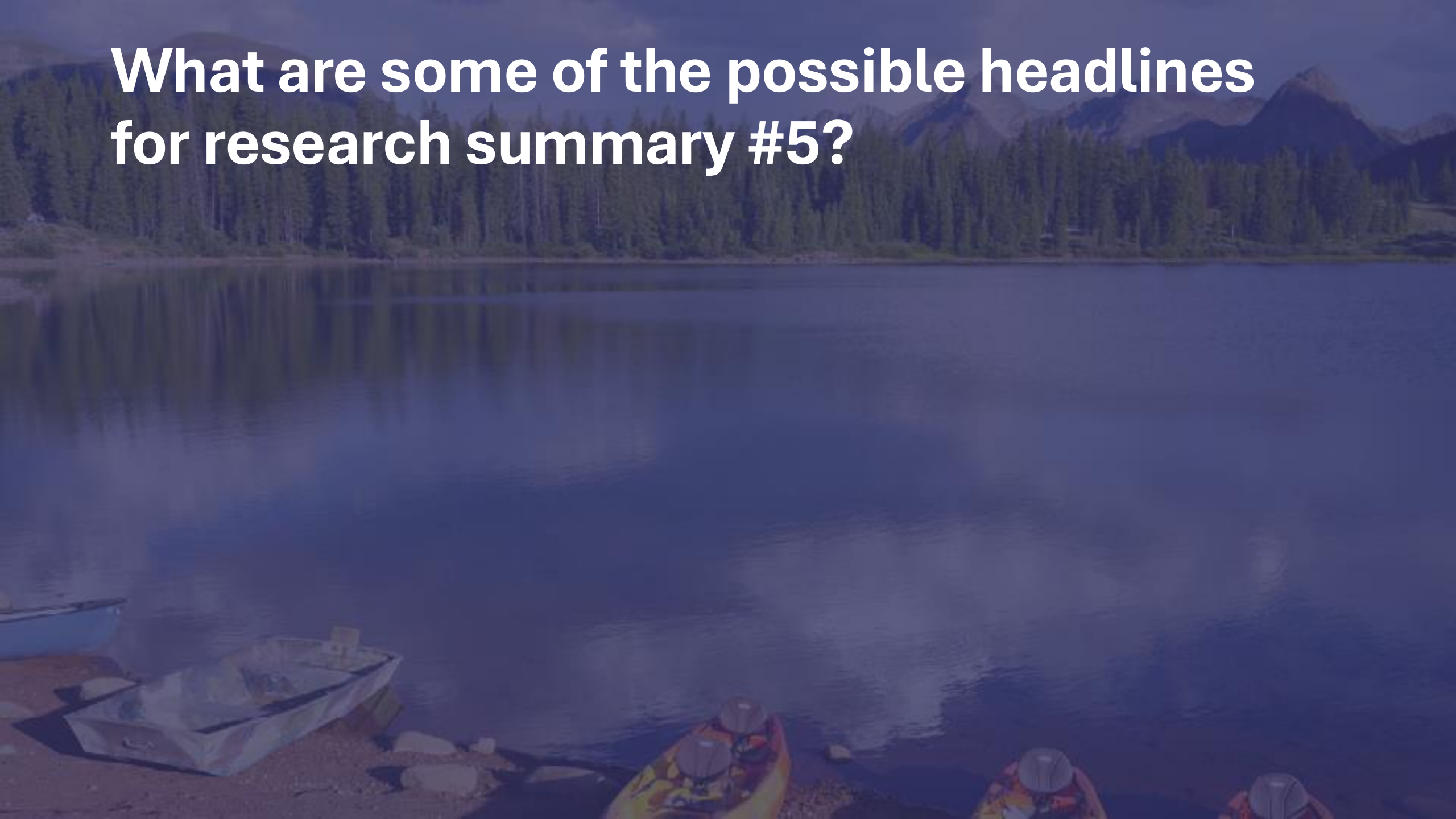
Title: Hadal trenches: Ultimate sink for microplastics

Research summary #5

Title: Near-surface environmentally forced changes in the Ross Ice Shelf observed with ambient seismic noise

Summary: Ice shelves are the floating buttresses of large glaciers that extend over the oceans and play a key role in restraining inland glaciers as they flow to the sea. Here, we measure seismic waves traveling through Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf. We discover the ice shelf nearly continuously 'sings' or 'hums' at frequencies of five or more seismic waves per second, excited by local and regional winds blowing across its snow dune-like topography.

What are some of the possible headlines for research summary #5?



Research summary #5: Actual headlines

Title: Near-surface environmentally forced changes in the Ross Ice Shelf observed with ambient seismic noise

CNN US Crime + Justice Watch

An Antarctic ice shelf is ‘singing’ and it’s creepy

By Spencer Parlier and Christina Zdanowicz, CNN

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An Antarctic ice shelf is singing, and it sounds like an eerie sci-fi soundtrack

The vast Ross Ice Shelf produces tones that vary in response to changing weather conditions.

Resources

- CIRES Connect https://ciresconnect.colorado.edu/en_US/communications
- AAAS communication toolkit https://www.aaas.org/resources/communication-toolkit
- CIRES and CU communicators
- The measure of things: A free social math calculator https://www.themeasureofthings.com/
- Science and Public: For honing your message, eliminating jargon https://scienceandpublic.com/

Thank you!

Questions?

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