# TikTok science stories lesson

## Years 7 and 8

Students learn about the diverse roles of science communicators and are challenged to create their own science communication text in a contemporary medium.

Curriculum links

### Science

### [AC9S7H04](https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/search?TTN=q%3DAC9S7H04&on=AC&AC=q%3DAC9S7H04%26pageOffset%3D0)/[AC9S8H04](https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/search?TTN=q%3DAC9S8H04&on=AC&AC=q%3DAC9S8H04%26pageOffset%3D0) – explore  the role of science communication in informing individual viewpoints and community policies and regulations

### [AC9S7I08](https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/search?TTN=q%3DAC9S7I08&on=AC&AC=q%3DAC9S7I08%26pageOffset%3D0)/[AC9S7I08](https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/search?TTN=q%3DAC9S7I08&on=AC&AC=q%3DAC9S7I08%26pageOffset%3D0) – write  and create texts to communicate ideas, findings and arguments for specific purposes and audiences, including selection of appropriate language and text features, using digital tools as appropriate

## Learning hook

As a class, watch [this short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kNr-Yjex4E&t=2s) (2:30) where proud Wiradjuri woman and astrophysicist Kirsten Banks explains her role as a science communicator.

Explain to students that Kirsten is an active communicator on a range of platforms. Students can find out more about Kirsten and explore her blogs, podcast and other media on her [website](https://astrokirsten.com.au/).

Now show students one of [Kirsten’s TikTok videos](https://www.tiktok.com/@astrokirsten?lang=en). Her content includes videos that align with Earth and space sciences and Physical sciences content at this level. A great starting place is this [video](https://www.tiktok.com/@astrokirsten/video/7054671229520825602?is_from_webapp=v1&item_id=7054671229520825602) about forces on a balloon.

As class, discuss who the audience for Kirsten’s videos could be, and what features of the video support that idea. What features of the text show how Kirsten connects with her audience?

Students can also read about Kirsten’s approach to communicating ideas on TikTok [here](https://thebrilliant.com.au/case-studies/kirsten-banks/).

Girls in focus: Research has shown that when girls are exposed to positive STEM role models who look like them, their interest increases along with an improved self-concept relating to STEM fields (Hughes, Nzekwe and Molyneaux, 2013). There are increasing numbers of scientists turning to TikTok to share their love of science with a broader audience, so encourage students to share scientists they identify with on the platform.

## Learning input

Science communication is the practice of informing, educating, raising awareness of science-related topics and engaging the public’s interest and enthusiasm for science. Science communicators can transform scientific information into accessible, understandable forms so all members of the public can develop scientific understandings of the world. Science communicators often play an important role in informing individuals and shaping community decisions.

Students can learn more about scientific communication and view some inspiring examples in this [article](https://shorthand.com/the-craft/12-examples-of-stunning-science-comms/index.html) from Shorthand.

Girls in focus: Research has found that just altering a job title to sound like it demands more ingenuity or creativity can boost the number of female applicants. Girls may not realise the creative opportunities or the potential to make a difference of a career in science communication.

## Learning construction

**Part A - explore ideas about the role of science communicators**

1. Watch the video [‘Are vaccines safe?’](https://www.science.org.au/education/immunisation-climate-change-genetic-modification/science-immunisation)
2. Consider how the purpose and audience for this video differ from the purpose and audience of Kirsten’s TikTok videos. Develop the idea that science communication needs a clear purpose and audience to be effective.
3. As a class, identify a range of purposes and examples of science communication. A shared class concept map might be one way to collate ideas.
4. As a way of broadening the activity, challenge students to find their own example of science communication to share with the class.

**Part B – challenge students create their own TikTok-style science communication videos**

Note that students should not be encouraged to use the TikTok app but should create and house their video safely using school-approved apps and digital tools.

TikTok videos can be up to 3 minutes long, but your students could be encouraged to complete a 60 second video, like those on Kirsten’s channel.

1. Students can select a science topic that relates to a current area of study, interest or a personal passion.
2. Before they begin creating their video, students should plan their content and how they are going to ensure effective and engaging communication. Students can use the template (see below).
3. Students should be encouraged to share their videos and seek feedback from others as part of their review process.

Girls in focus: Girls are motivated when they are given opportunities to approach projects their own way, so they are exercising their personal preferences and creativity. Emphasise the value of creating a unique video that expresses each student’s personality and style.

Resources   
Shorthand 12 Examples of Stunning Science Communication

[Storyboard template](https://www.thegist.edu.au/media/1736/storyboard-template.pdf)

[The Brilliant (2020) Communications powerhouse Kylie Walker is altering our perceptions of science and scientists](https://thebrilliant.com.au/case-studies/visibilityofwomenscientists/)