

Rebecca Jacobson

Job title: Science Reporter for PBS NewsHour

Can you tell us a little bit about your job/experience at grad school?

What's an average day look like for you?

I'm a science reporter for The PBS NewsHour, so my job telling the public the story of science, and why they need to know, or would find interesting, about science and engineering. As a science journalist, I cover everything related to STEM. I could be writing about the [mind-blowing gravitational waves discoveries in physics](#) and explaining [why Hawking said there are no black holes](#), and the next week I'm visiting a two-month-old sloth bear cub [whose mother ate her siblings](#). Each day and each story is different, but my primary objectives are to ask questions, listen, learn and then tell the story, whether that's in writing, photos or video. I spend most of my days talking to scientists and engineers and asking them questions: how does a statistics formula calculate a [Superbowl winner](#)? What happens to the [blood vessels in our brain](#) when we get concussions? How has climate change caused more [sea ice in Antarctica](#), while the Arctic ice cap is shrinking? Because I'm also a videographer and photographer, I also spend time "in the field" and see science in action for myself, like the time I followed a group of biologists into the Shenandoah Valley to hunt for [hellbender salamanders](#), an enormous amphibian whose numbers in the Eastern U.S. are unknown.



How did you start on your path to a career in STEM and what did that path look like?

It took a lot of twists. While I was interested in science as a kid and as a teenager, I was so intimidated by the math that I thought I couldn't do it, so I focused on my writing skills. I went to college to study English literature and film, and stumbled into journalism through a public television internship. When I landed at NewsHour, I was eager to write anything just for the experience, and our science page needed content. My first few stories were a struggle, because I was a new journalist and I wasn't sure which questions to ask. Then I covered a story about a clock at NIST that could measure a change in space-time, here on Earth, and the response was huge. As a writer, it's an amazing feeling to know that people have read your work and they *got* it. It taught them something. After that, I took on any science assignment I could.

What would you say to young folks who are thinking about a career in STEM?

Do it! There's room at the table for so many areas of science. My best advice is to make your education as well-rounded as possible. Don't ignore an area of study because you think "I'll never need to know math/literature/history." So many people think that science and the arts are diametrically opposed. They're not. Scientists and engineers have to think creatively to solve their problems, and journalists need logic and reasoning when we're gathering and dissecting information. Use all the areas of your brain!