

# Science Summaries

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Anybody who's ever read so much as a Malcolm Gladwell article or an Alfie Kohn book knows that science can be fascinating, that its attempts at answering our questions not only can have a real impact on our lives but are interesting in their own right. Wouldn't it be great if there was a place that reported these things?

If this exists, please tell me — I'd love to read it. But if it doesn't, I'd like to start one. Here's the idea:

We have a bunch of contributors, each of whom reads a variety of journals or journal summaries. When they come across an article that seems particularly interesting, they write up a one or two paragraph summary of the experiment and the findings aimed at an intelligent but generalist audience along with a link to the actual article.

So here's an example of what this might look like:

Economists at Cornell and Indiana University tried to see if television causes autism. Thinking that rainfall could cause kids to watch more TV and thus induce autism, they looked at county-level data in California, Oregon, and Washington — states with high variability in rainfall — and found that autism was correlated with rainfall ( $R^2=.77$ ). Thinking that the use of cable TV was another random variable that increased autism, they looked at similar data in California and Pennsylvania and found the use of cable TV correlated with autism ( $R^2=.21$ ). [\[Paper\]](#)

(I probably screwed up the  $R^2$  bit, but that's why I'm looking for other people to write these.) Of course, this particular study got lots of media attention (that's why I knew about it), but I'm hoping that with enough contributors we'll uncover interesting studies that don't make it into the general news.

So the contributors write a paragraph like this and send it in to an editor, who posts it to a blog, where people can subscribe and comment and so on like any other blog.

I'm happy to set up the blog and serve as the initial editor, so what I really need are contributors. Do you read journals or other reports of new science? If so, either post here (be sure to include your email so I can contact you!) or email [me@aaronsw.com](mailto:me@aaronsw.com) with a list of the journals or news sources you read and would be willing to go thru.

Or, if you have comments on the idea, feel free to post those too.