

What kind of animal is a medical writer? Attributes and attitudes

Jane Fraser

An intelligent ape

- A quick learner
 - Lots of different therapeutic areas
 - Lots of different drugs
- Highly adaptable
 - Lots of different kinds of projects
 - Lots of different people and situations
- Highly socialized
 - It's all about teamwork and communication
 - Not an ivory tower

Passionate about writing

Things you can learn before you apply for jobs

- Write as much as you can (papers, posters, abstracts, magazine articles)
- Edit others' work
- Read as much as you can
- Be an enthusiastic journal club member
- Take advantage of any training your university offers
 - writing skills
 - presentation skills
 - Word
 - Powerpoint
 - reference management
 - statistics

A nit-picker – and willing to be nit-picked by others

- Accuracy
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Word use
- Consistency
- Compliance with industry guidelines and codes of practice

An elephant

- A heavyweight
 - able to mix with opinion-leaders
 - without getting crushed
- An excellent memory

A donkey

- Hard-working
- Carries heavy loads without complaint
- Able to take direction
- Do your share of the boring work
- Will be offered carrots

A cheetah

- Curious
- Alert
- Quick
 - meets deadlines
 - without compromising accuracy

A camel

- Travels long distances (sometimes fun but not always!)
- Tolerates difficult conditions when necessary
- Able to go for long periods without food and water (or at least able to survive on sandwiches and coffee for days at a time when attending conferences)

A swan

- Serene on the surface
- Even if paddling frantically underneath

A rhinoceros

- Has a thick skin (you will be criticized; your text will *always* be amended by other people such as clients and opinion-leaders)
- Charges a lot (good writers are at a premium)