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Cover: The roots of human speech extend back about 2 million years, according to scientists who study the bases of fossil skulls. Shown here are views of the base (larger photo) and the front (inset) of a fossil skull belonging to an australopithecine who lived in southern Africa 2 million years ago. Fossil-base studies of Neanderthals, who lived more than 30,000 years ago, suggest they had a limited speech ability. But researchers who recently found a Neanderthal neck bone contend the extinct creatures were indeed capable of "modern" speech. (Photos: Jeffrey T. Laitman)



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## Letters

### Title turnoff?

The points made in Robert A. Freeman's letter to the editor (SN: 5/27/89, p.323) cannot be overstated. It is indeed essential that articles have accurate titles. I look to SCIENCE NEWS to report, not sell, science.

*William H. Brandenburg*  
Indianapolis, Ind.

**Some of your** sparkling titles and scintillating introductory sentences turn out to be stupid turnoffs.

*Jim Buhr*  
Northridge, Calif.

**Recently you heard** from a self-identified curmudgeon complaining about "cute titles." Balderdash! I've always appreciated the humorous bits in your writings, and I think such is greatly needed amongst our scientific literature, which tends to be so professionally stuffy. SCIENCE NEWS has life to it!

*Richard W. Ikenberry*  
Kearney, Neb.

**It is letters** like Robert A. Freeman's that help explain the sorry state of science and math education. Science is a single pursuit within the entire range of human experience. It has no meaning without the perspective offered by extrascientific experience. The shape of science education would be in excellent shape if your staff were our teachers.

Please do not change your policy on headlines. They are among the great joys of your publication.

*Stu Vandermark*  
Natick, Mass.

**I have always** enjoyed your light touch in headlines, and I hope you will not be deterred by the letter writer who criticized you for it. I firmly believe that "science" need not imply "stodgy." Robert A. Freeman would not lose that much time if he lightened up a bit and enjoyed SCIENCE NEWS in its entirety.

*James F. Snyder*  
St. Petersburg, Fla.

**For me, your** clever headlines are anything but irritating. They are often intriguing, sometimes downright funny and always friendly. They say to me — a scientific amateur — that what follows will be accessible and comprehensible. The clarity of the text always bears out that promise.

*Anita Monsees*  
Syracuse, N. Y.

**The only excuse** for learning English, arguably one of the most difficult languages, is to be able to play with it. That makes life more fun! Besides, as a fifth-grade teacher, I have learned the value of being able to see a subject from an offbeat direction in expanding one's horizons and making connections to other things one knows. Please don't change!

*Bonita Schraut*  
Los Fresnos, Tex.

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