

PITCHING-NETWORKING TIP SHEET

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BEFORE YOU PITCH...

-Research not only the topic, but also the publication, and the section you're targeting. (know, and include in the pitch relevant articles published already in the pub, and state how yours is different).

-Understand the particular voice or tone of the publication.

(e.g. *The Economist* is more erudite, sarcastic; *Outside* is testosterone-filled, witty, sassy.)

- (For features) Find one or more strong characters. (At least via phone; ideally, in person, on-site, but that's a time/\$\$ investment.)

-Pitch to a specific editor, vs. the publication.

-When is it time to pitch?

Once you've confirmed the story idea will hold water; after enough reporting to weave some narrative and sense of place into the pitch.

-Read the pub's freelance-submission guidelines.

CRAFTING AND SENDING THE PITCH

- For newcomers, a Catch-22: How many clips do you need to be deemed by an editor to pitch and write an article?

- Depends on the publication. Start with zero, but with a more local publication. An editor might ask you to submit "on spec" for the first time. But don't do it more than once.

- Send your query letter to one publication at a time.

-Use references and referrals of a friend/colleague who's written for this pub. (???)

-How long should the pitch be?

-Depends on publication. From 2-3 paragraphs to a full page (single-spaced).

-Error on the side of formality, especially if it's your first query to a publication.

-Email the query in the body of an email, not as an attachment. (OK to send an attachment as a backup.)

-Include in the pitch:

- What's the story angle?
- A hook (Why now? What's new? Even for features some news peg helps sell it.)
- A novel or counterintuitive approach to or perspective on a problem and/or a solution.
- A specific narrative or special perspective.
- A nut/billboard graph highlighting the central theme or question.

-Below the query narrative, tell the editor why you should write this story. (Your skills, experience, unique perspective, etc.)

NOW WHAT?

-Follow up with an email in 1-2 weeks, depending on the frequency of the publication (shorter if it's a time-sensitive news article).

-Follow up with a phone call in another week or so if you don't hear anything.

-If still no word, email a courteous but confident note saying you plan to pitch it elsewhere if you don't hear back within 2-3 days.

-On to Plan B (with a pitch that's tailored to Plan B publication).

Good luck!