



Fun Work Assignment #2

This week we're exploring the all-important pitch letter—and the key elements you need for successful pitches.

The pitch letter/email is your ticket to publishing articles in magazines, newspapers and on web sites. It can take a lot of practice formulating one, but once you do, you're halfway there. This is because nailing down the idea, the story, the hook, is often the most difficult part. Sure, you may want to write about food in Thailand, but what is the story? Or maybe you want to cover restaurants in Paris, but again, what is the story?

Coming up with the “hook” is an art, and once you’ve mastered it, you’ll be able to send off ideas to editors with confidence.

Take your ideas from Module 1...

Name a place or travel concept would you like to write about.

What would you like to write about this destination or concept?

This needs be boiled down to once clear sentence. This one sentence will be included in the first paragraph of your pitch.

Here is a pitch I wrote that sold a story to The Boston Globe Travel Section. I dissected it so that you can see how to craft your own.

Dear Anne: [it's not rocket science, but always make sure you have the correct editor and the correct spelling of their name!]

[Here I set the scene] I arrive in Paris, as others have before me, to eat. As I flit from bistro to restaurant to patisserie, enjoying *soupe a l'oignon gratinee*, *croque monsieur with truffles*, *Paris-Brest*, *canard aux herbes*, *croissants au chocolat* and other typical (and not so) French food, I really can't help but think of how much I'd love to cook here, to shop at local markets and return to my make-believe kitchen to chop, sauté, simmer and bake. **Which is how I find myself on the phone booking cooking classes that take place in local homes, foregoing restaurant reservations for an apron, a whisk and yearning to cook the leeks and other fresh produce I see at the market.** [this is the SENTENCE i mention, the hook—the crux of the story]

[here I offer details about the class] At the Rue de Montorgueil market, in the 2nd Arrondissement, fish, eggs, strawberries and cherries glisten in the spring sun. Salami hangs from string waiting to be sliced for charcuterie. Marion, the youngest member of the esteemed Escoffier group of chefs and my cooking instructor at "Ooh La La Foods," has taken us here to shop for the ingredients we'll use in our dishes.

[here I tell the editor the title, the word count and what exactly I'll be writing about] In "Cooking a *Paris*," an article of about 1,000 words, I will discuss the entire experience of a cooking class in someone's home, from shopping at the local markets and then learning to cook from a local Parisian. I can write about one class or include several "at home" cooking schools.

[here you would include links to other stories you've written, but she is familiar with my articles, so I didn't do that here.]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tracey Ceurvels

[I usually add my phone number here in case the editor has a question.]

Here are the 12 important elements to a winning pitch letter:

1. Correct editor/correct spelling of their name (obvious, but must be reiterated)
2. Your opening sentence. It must be riveting! Set the scene of where you are—lots of details about your experience. Lure the reader into your story. This first sentence is oh-so-important, so make it as juicy as you can.
3. The Nut, aka, Your hook: what is this story about? Nailing this hook is the gist of your whole story!
4. How many words is your story (you can estimate and often times an editor will tell you what word count they'd like)?
5. What is the title of your story? This may change, but it's best to provide one.
6. Will you provide photos?
7. When will you be able to hand in, "file," the article?
8. Where have you published? Or lived or studied? (If it's relevant to the story.)
9. Provide links to other stories (if you have them).
10. Your lovely self. Add a bit of yourself into your pitch: is there any relevant information as to why you're the best person to write this story?
11. How is this story relevant to their publication?
12. Great writing. Make sure the writing flows, is grammatically correct and has no typos...all major turn-offs to an editor.

The idea is to make it easy for the editor to say “YES, I’d love your story!”

By providing as many details as possible about the story and why it’s a great fit for their publication, you’ll be on the road to success.

Get rolling now: on a separate piece of paper, begin formulating a pitch that you would send to an editor.

Start with setting the scene of a place or concept you would like to cover, offering your “hook” and all the other details mentioned above.

Now you’re almost ready to start pitching!

See you on the next Module.