

How to Pitch a Journal or Magazine Article

- I. Editors need timely pieces by writers who can reliably appeal to their publication's readers. Therefore:
 - a. Know their readers, the architecture of their publication, and the range of articles and styles suitable to each section.
 - b. Know what's timely (in general, and in their publication)
 - c. Give every indication of reliability—including being in social and professional circles the editor trusts.

- II. Editors are busy. Therefore, in your query:
 - a. Have an irresistible hook
 - b. Have a highly refined nutshell statement
 - c. Be able to state the benefit/appeal to the reader
 - d. Highlight the information that makes you reliable

- III. Editors have routines. Therefore:
 - a. Know the preferred submission format and timing and route.
 - b. Anticipate the needs of the journal in terms of your article's length, topic, and timing: spell these out.

- IV. Practical tips:
 - a. Mediabistro is an excellent source of information on publications.
 - b. Only pitch once you know the essence of the story and who or what the main characters are—don't offer a vague "topic."
 - c. Pitches are typically 1 to 1.5 pages long, with a typical structure as follows:
 - i. A paragraph that hooks editor and shows you can hook reader, in the style of the journal.
 - ii. A nutshell statement of the story, your approach, and why we should care.
 - iii. Expand on why it matters to the reader, what they'll learn, how they'll benefit from the story. Refer, if you can, to a recent related article in their pages, to show what yours will do or can add.
 - iv. Give a specific, textured, sense of what the article will look like, who/what it will focus on. (iii-iv can be combined in one paragraph)
 - v. A bit about you, with clippings, bio—ONLY what will help reassure the editor that you can deliver what you promise, and that your credibility on your subject is strong.
 - d. After a respectful interval, send a followup message.

More on “the I.a.”: Know the readers, the architecture of the publication, and the range of articles and styles suitable to each section.

- I. Be a close reader of the publication, so you can infer the readership it has in mind.
 - a. What relationship or tone does it strike in regard to reader and subject? How often, and from what angles, does it cover a subject—and how timely does it try to be?
 - b. What sections or channels does it have, and which are accessible to freelance pitches?
 - c. What illustrations, fonts, layout?
 - d. What advertisements?
- II. Notice design-level decisions
 - a. What kinds of ledes and conclusions? How explicit is the argument, and how soon?
 - b. What sort of authority do writers tend to establish, and what sorts of evidence do they tend to point to?
 - c. How long are pieces, paragraphs, sentences?
 - d. What is the balance between narrative and exposition? What does it assume readers know already, and what does it assume people want to know, and how does it assume they want to learn it?
 - e. What sorts of credentials does it look for in its writers and in its sources/references?
 - f. What is its range of diction? Its references, allusions?
- III. What are its peer publications, and what distinctive identity does it maintain? What stylistic and substantive choices help it maintain that identity?
- IV. What represents a successful publication, for the magazine or website?

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