

The Freelance Writer's PITCH CHECKLIST

Want more editors to say YES to your pitches?

Before you send your pitch email, make sure you've marked off every box on this checklist:

- Look for submission guidelines.** Whether you want to pitch a blog, a news site or a print magazine, the first step is to confirm they accept pitches. If the publication isn't seeking submissions, they probably won't be interested in your pitch – so check the website for submission guidelines.

If the site/outlet doesn't tell you how to pitch them, they're not a good candidate for your pitches.

- Read previous articles.** Before you pitch, it's a good idea to become familiar with the types of stories the publication runs. Do they prefer personal narratives or evergreen listicles? Do they have a specific voice that matches your writing style?

Make sure the publication is a good fit for what you want to write.

- Make sure they haven't already published your idea.** Want to write a post about 10 Ways to Beat Procrastination? Make sure the publication you're targeting hasn't already run a similar article. Google Advanced Search is great for this; type in a few keywords ("procrastination," "productivity") and add in the URL of the publication you're planning to pitch.

If a site has already run your idea, you might want to pitch it somewhere else.

- Draft a pitch that explains why your idea is important.** Your pitch has two jobs: to communicate what you want to write about and clarify why it's important. Usually, a pitch is important because it has a new takeaway for a reader.

Make sure your pitch includes the idea and the takeaway.

- Frame your pitch as a story.** Write an intro that sets up a conflict. Describe what you (or someone else) did in response to that conflict. Then describe what you (or someone else) learned as a result of that action. This structure won't work for every pitch, but it's a good way to show your editor that you can turn an idea into a compelling narrative.

By framing your pitch as a microstory, you prove you understand how stories work.

- Make sure you specify what type of piece you'd like to write.** “I'd like to write a 1,200-word personal narrative.” “I'd like to write a 17-item listicle.” “I'd like to write a 3,000-word reported piece.”

Telling an editor what type of piece you're planning to write shows them you've put thought into what the final product will look like.

- Follow all of the submission guidelines.** Remember those submission guidelines you looked up earlier? Time to prove you can follow directions. For example, if the publication wants a specific word (like “pitch”) in the email subject line, make sure that word is in the subject line.

Editors want to know that you can pay attention to detail and write to their publication's style – so make your pitch match their guidelines.

- Keep your pitch short.** Editors get dozens of pitches every day, and they often email back and forth with 10 or more writers at once. They're looking for writers who can keep email messages short, and that starts with the pitch.

Keep your pitch under two paragraphs to make sure it doesn't get skimmed and archived.

- Add links to clips.** Editors like to see that you've been published elsewhere, and they will use clips to gauge your writing style. Add links to two or three relevant clips at the end of your pitch. If you don't have published clips, you can link to articles you've written on your own blog.

Giving editors a sample of your previous work qualifies your skill and experience.

And here's one final checklist item, for after you've sent that first pitch:

- Keep pitching.** The more you pitch, the more chances you have of getting your pitches accepted. Pay attention to how editors respond after they accept your pitch and work with you on the article; if they invite you to pitch again, you'll have a better idea of what they're looking for. You'll form relationships that will lead to more freelance work, and your career will begin to grow.

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