



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

Today we are going to be talking about answers to your most common pitching questions and I've pulled together quite a bunch. And some of them have come specifically from emails from you guys, I have a couple that I've put in verbatim and others are sort of paraphrased. As I mentioned earlier for those of you who are joining us live I'm here for a conference so just last night when I arrived I was chatting with some folks about what they struggle with pitching, so I have some of those things to add to you guys as well.

So today we're going to be talking about first, why pitching is such a sore spot for people. Because I think a lot of the questions that I commonly get follow into 2 categories. They're either very clearly how to: like what is the process, can you give me a template for this. Or they're more psychological, the kind of things I can tell you: oh yes, this is just this, but even if I give you the answer you are not gonna run out the door and do it right away.

And then we are going to go through some questions I've already compiled in advance. And there are so many different things that come up around this, for instance, we are going to be talking in next week, or not next week but in two weeks from now webinar about letters of introduction for trade magazines. Pitching trade magazine is a whole other can of worms, so I actually don't have a slide on this but if that's a question you have just drop it in the chat box and we will address that on today's call. And then after we get through the ones I've pulled together I'll go through the ones you guys are putting in the chat box now that we haven't already covered at some point during the slides.

And in terms of pitching, I've been on both sides of the desk. But one of the things I tell people for instance, just today someone was pitching to some newspapers and she got a response from the *LA Times* but the idea was past the print deadline for that anniversary event. And I said send her another pitch, and she was like "oh it's so easy for you Gabi, you've been doing this for so long." And I was like, "No, it's not any easier for me than it is for anybody else."

Even when I was new it wasn't any easier, but the thing is that I realized that made me keep doing it and that made me not be afraid was that editors are nice by enlarge. And that when you email them, they surprisingly do often email back even if it's a "no." Also, surprisingly they often tell you why it's a "no." They say it's not a fit, or they say we covered this too recently or something like that. And I think that a lot of the things that many people struggle with in terms of what holds them back from pitching on the fear or nervousness side is alleviated by emailing editors, by having those correspondences and seeing that it's not as, you know, as scary of a situation as they may have thought.



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

So, let's talk about this, so why do we feel so much resistance to pitching, to getting these pitches out the door? We know what we need to do to get into new markets, to get new work, to get that story from that trip that was just amazing and we know it has to have a home somewhere. What keeps us from doing that? And I've mentioned this before, but one time I was at a press trip with somebody whose sort of regular gig was that she wrote most of her writing for *New York Magazine*. Like what a clip right? And she told me that she was afraid of pitching and hadn't sent out a pitch in a year and a half, and was just now like having pitch block. So, it happens to everybody. And I think there's three big reasons for that. The first one is just this general thing that we all feel about any type of sales, right? It's like selling things feels icky, and asking for things feels icky. And it takes a little while to, I don't know if become hardened is the right word, but it takes a little while to become one hundred percent secure in this fact.

But the thing is, when we are pitching articles, we are not asking for someone for something, you are not asking the editor to do you a favor. You are not asking someone to like you, or validate you as a person. You have a product you are selling which is a completed travel article and this is a person that might be interested in that product because they need it, because they have pages in their magazine or newspaper, or on their website that will be empty in future days and need to be filled with things.

So, it's so hard to wrap your mind around this but by giving them great ideas when they need them you are doing the editor a favor. Not the other way around. And all the editors that don't make you feel like that, that make you feel like you are a bother to be in their inbox offering them something that they need, quite frankly aren't editors that you want to be working with, okay?

The editors who are so high and mighty like they don't need another pitch, you probably don't want to be writing for them because they are not people who are going to give you a lot of work. Somebody was just saying yesterday about an editor from a certain magazine, and you might know which one I am talking about by saying that, but an editor from a certain magazine that was at the conference and she was sort of emulating the editor and doing this little hair flip in this very coquettish, well aloof thing.

And the fact of the matter is that it might be a magazine that everybody wants to write for but it's also a magazine anyone who's tried to write for really hates because they are not very pleasant to work with. So, it's not worth your time to be dealing with people who are going to make you feel bad about offering something that they need. So, if you do get an editor who does respond to you like that don't let it influence all your other pitches. Just say, "That person is having a bad day" or "that person isn't very nice" and go find someone who is, okay?



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

So fear of rejection, right? This is kind of related to the previous one. Why do we feel icky about asking people for things because we think they'll say no? But, it's thinking that they will say no is really not that bad. Like when you have to do something, like if you go to a psychiatrist and you tell them about being afraid, they often ask you to envision what would be the worst scenario. And this is the kind of case where what is the worst scenario of an editor not wanting your pitch. They'll say no? They'll put you on a blacklist and you will never be able to write for them again? No, we all know that not true.

And so when you really think about it, having an editor just say “no” doesn't really sound quite so horrible, except it means that we are actually afraid that if they don't like that one pitch that they will never one to hear from us again or that they will never want to work with us again, and so on and so forth. But the real fact is and again I've mentioned this before, but a rejection is an open door, not a closed door. Because that editor did not need to write you back and many editors wont write back to people who are “no's” for a couple reasons: a) to save themselves time, b) because who knows, maybe they might want to use it sometime, but c) because they are afraid that you will be crazy and keep responding to them and say, “Are you sure, but this piece is so wonderful?” “Do you know who you are saying no to?” Like crazy, crazy things editors really do get these emails, everybody has a story about them. So, if they have responded to you it is an open door to keep emailing them—not a closed door.

So, I always like to say that a “no” is the best response that you can get because if you get an assignment but don't have any relationship with that editor, it's very easy to write a story that's not in line with what they're looking for because you are very wedded to your idea of the story and you don't have a rapport with them so you don't feel comfortable asking questions and checking in along the way. But, if you do have some back and forth with them before you get a story going you have a much better feel for them as a person and what they like and don't like, and that tends to result in better articles.

So the other thing that I think is a big hold back moment is not so much that we're afraid of being rejected, but we are kind of afraid of being embarrassed. Like, we think we will send this pitch and not so much that somebody will laugh at you, but I think I have heard people say that they are afraid they will get laughed at. But that you will do something that is so obviously wrong in your pitch that it's like that dream of going into your classroom naked for a test or something. But we are afraid that we will do something wrong that will clearly broadcast that we are inadequate in some way. But the fact of the matter is, there is no one hundred percent certified you learn this in your masters and its part of becoming a professional journalist way of pitching.

Even the people who have a Masters in journalism are taught, it's not even something that they teach really in journalism school. A big complaint about people who have gone to



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

journalism school is that they don't learn how to pitch at all, or they don't learn how to work with editors. So, there aren't people out there who know how to do this better than you just because. The ones that know how to do this better than you, per se, it's because they've been doing it and trying different things for a while, okay? Alright.

So let's get into the questions. So, in the chat box, someone just chimed in she had an experience with an editor like this, she has no desire to pitch her again based on her email response. I'd love if you copy and paste that so I can read it and talk about how to respond to that email by the way.

So, the number one question (even if people don't ask it) I get is **how long should the pitch be?** And the common editor response to this is, only as long as it needs to be for me to know what your story is about.

Right, so that doesn't help, right? Somebody told me, I don't think I saw one of her pitches, but somebody told me the other day that we were talking on a coaching call about how she puts together her pitches, her process. And, I asked her to describe to me what she puts in there, and she said, "You know, I start by saying this and this, and then I have six to eight paragraphs of every single detail about the story.

Ok, a pitch is a tease. A pitch is a sneak peek. It's like the old fashioned, like cabaret dancer, I guess not a cabaret dancer, but pulling up off the skirt. It's not the full enchilada, and it's certainly not more things than would go in the end story. So, a really good gauge for wondering if this should go in my pitch or not is, "Is it one hundred percent related to the actual core topic of my article?" And if you don't know what the core topic of the article is, and can't say it in one sentence, even if it's one sentence with three dependent clauses, then you have work to do because it's not the pitch that is the issue, it's the idea. The idea needs work, the idea needs refinement, the idea needs to be matched better to the magazine. The idea needs to be an idea instead of the topic.

So, I just threw this in here because I know people will ask for this otherwise. So, the format that I recommend for pitches is three paragraphs. I often refer to them as P one, P two and P three. So, P one is the intro, which journalists call a lede, and I like calling it a lede and if you don't already use that word you should teach yourself to sort of picture it that way.

Because it reminds you that this is a lead into something. It's like you have opened the door and you are beckoning someone to come into this secret room with you and see what's in there. Okay, it's not a full, full scene in your story, it's not the history of the place, it is the



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

preview, it is what comes before the main event. So that sort of helps you remember that not only does it need to be short but that it needs to build towards something. It needs to build interest, it needs to build excitement and it needs to draw.

One of the big things that I noticed with new writers' ledes having problems is that they don't draw you in. They don't make you have to keep reading. And when you are pitching this is an absolute must, because if your editor doesn't have to keep reading then they won't keep reading, right? Unless they have to, right? Like why would they bother if they have other things to do? So, they are only going to keep reading your pitch for a piece if they desperately need a story, if it's not super interesting.

So make sure the beginning of your story is leading up to and leading the editor into your idea. And then in P two we want to talk about exactly what the story is and nothing else. So, we are not telling the story, we are telling the editor what the story is, what it will look like, how long it will be, how many interviews you will have in there, how many different bullet points, not bullet points, how many different sections if it is a round up.

And I'm going to talk a little bit about what that means in a minute. But the last paragraph is another one where people go off rails either because they don't know what is important enough to put in there, or because they make it too long. So, the rule of thumb is the third paragraph, p three or the ISG I'm so great paragraph I've also seen it called, should only have the facts about you that are relevant to the story at hand.

So, you want to show the editor that you have been published before so they are not afraid that you will flake on them or not submit an article that looks like an article rather than a sixth grader's essay. And you want to tell them what experience you have that is relevant to the article at hand. So, I'm speaking this weekend at a blogging conference and I'm putting together something about pitching print magazines and one of my slides is about how your blog is not your clip, your blog is what establishes you as an expert.

So if you have a blog that is about breweries and Charlotte, North Carolina, and you are pitching an editor a story about high end cuisine and Sonoma, California, your blog is not relevant in this paragraph, okay?

So, we can get into some nitty gritty questions about this in a little bit. Um, and somebody was asking if they could see examples of pitches. I don't have them in this webinar because that's not strictly the purpose of this webinar, but we do have one a blog post on a blog which



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

is the Anatomy of the Perfect Pitch. We also have an old webinar, Crafting the Perfect Pitch as well.

So, second question asking how long should it be? **How much detail should it include?** So, in each paragraph it's going to be a little different and the details you include should be a little different. So, in the first paragraph which is the lede you should have details that are the types of details that will be in your final story.

So, these can be details that are setting a sense of place, that are introducing a character like your guide or if you are profiling somebody who's very important. But these details should be more descriptive and illustrative in nature. Whereas in the second paragraph which is about what your story is going to be, details are much dryer. The details you should include are not the entire backstory of everything in your roundup.

They are the number of things in your roundup. Why that thing is important and why you have access to that thing if it's hard to have access to. They are about the structure, the putting together the process of writing the story. Whereas in the third paragraph I recommend you add as few details as possible. So, the paragraph is about you, the reason people go wrong there is that they let it become quite long, and in doing so they are often including things that are not relevant to the story at hand, which I was talking about before.

And what tends to happen there is people are talking about, say you are writing a story about Tokyo and you live in Japan. So, they might be writing quite a bit about living in Japan and how long they've lived in Japan and why they live in Japan, and why they know Tokyo and they particularly know this particular person they want to profile for this piece and how long they've known this person and why this person is interesting.

But the only thing we needed to know that was relevant to this particular story was that end part. It was about why they know this person and why this person is important and their connection to them. Because everything else about living in Japan and how long they've lived in Japan and why they live in Japan all these things, well they might be the precursors to that little fact to the end, they are not things the editor needs to know to decide to assign you that story.

So, one of the things I think that's often less known if you haven't pitched often is that the editors' questions don't need to be answered in your pitch. When an editor has questions they will ask you those specific questions and you can send them answers to those specific questions to them in response to their email.



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

But you don't need to pre-guess what every single question they have would be and include that in your pitch. I've often seen editors send back a page worth of questions that takes you three pages to answer them back but the thing is that's not the kind of information that should be in your initial pitch. Like I said, the first pitch is the real tease and any details that you do include need to show three things. They need to show that you know how to write, that you know how to write travel, so you know how to create a sense of place, and that you know how to be a journalist.

So, the first two of those things really happen in the first paragraphs, and the third one, how to be a journalist, shows when you put the piece together. And so that is when you are saying who you are going to interview, how many sections will be in your roundup, the section of the magazine it's going to go in, you are going to show that you did your homework by saying that I am pitching this for your City Guide section, I know that you also covered Australia ten months ago.

But you've covered this city and I'm pitching you that city, and I hope enough time has passed for it to be ok to pitch this story to you. You want to show them that you know how to gather the right information that's reported and that you know how to present it.

So, the gathering is just telling them that you've already been to this place, and that you've already spoken to this and that person. The presenting is telling them that you know that their section of the magazine you're pitching for instance, I like to use the example of *EnRoute*. They have very specific formatted section called high-low and in high-low it takes one destination and then it gives you three different experiences.

For instance, I was looking at one that takes place in Australia, and the three experiences are seafood type restaurants, picnicking out on the beach, and getting out in the water. And for each of those it gives not just one but several different ways to experience either on the cheap or lavishly. That's the high-low part. But the section includes not just expensive Sydney and inexpensive Sydney. It specifically includes these three different topics and within each topic you can't just give one, you have to give multiple options.

So that's where you show, like I said there's the reporting and there's the assembling, there's the presenting. So, by studying the magazine and the section you want to pitch and making sure that you project to the editor that you know where this story goes and that you know how it's put together and you don't have to go to school for that. And in the database, we show all these things about how the articles are put together but you don't even have to have the database.



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

You can pick up the physical magazine and look at how they put the travel article together and all you have to do is pitch an article that has the exact same assembly line. The same sections as the one you have already seen in the magazine. You learn from the magazine.

What Should the Subject Line Be? Your subject line is very, very important. The thing is your subject line also writes itself. It's not something you need to think about. So, what that means is that your subject line is not something you should be creating from scratch for the purpose of your email.

What your subject line should consist of is the word pitch. I like to do it in lower case. I heard from editors that it stands out more than from pitches that come from PR people which are always in title case which has every word capitalized. So, I write pitch in lower case and then a semicolon and then the title of my article. You don't need to make this up from scratch, you pick up a copy of the magazine and you see what title they use. So, it might be the title is the name of the section.

For instance, I remember I was pitching for a magazine about tea and I think the title of the particular section I was pitching is always Tea Experience name of city. There is not creativity, there is no variation. While I certainly could have sat there and spent a bunch of time trying to craft some evocative words that's just not the title of the section, there's just no need. The editor wouldn't use it then there's no point. But, if I put in my subject line, "I'm pitching you tea experience from this city" It's very clear to her what the pitch is about.

The thing is that really helps when you put in your pitch very clearly not just the word pitch but also the section you are referring to and the location you are covering. Because that also helps them if they have a need for pitches for specific sections to see right away you are helping fill that, or if they have a need for stories from specific geographic area to see that you are helping with that as well.

Should I tell them I'm going on/went on a press trip? In your pitch letter there's really no place for the word press trip in any shape or form. If they ask you about it later, of course you should be honest with them. But, in your pitch you should not be mentioning that you are pitching this because you are going on a press trip,

Or you are pitching this because you were on a press trip and you need to complete this story. The real moral of the story is that for the purpose of the editor deciding whether or not they are interested in that particular article idea or you as a writer whether the story is or is not from a press trip really doesn't enter into the equation.



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

If they are a magazine or a newspaper with a policy on press trips then they will make that known to you. I don't think in the last five years or so that a magazine had a press trip policy and forgot to check with the writer and the article got pulled after the fact.

If the magazine has a serious issue about press trips they are going to tell you right away. As soon as you pitch them and they like the idea before they even show you they like the idea they often say if this is from a press trip. So that's a good way to know they probably don't take articles from press trips. And that's really just the *New York Times* and maybe one or two other places. But, even with the *New York Times* these things are very situational.

What If I am going on a trip and need a confirmed assignment? How do I tell them I have a deadline? You don't want to pitch an editor, especially a big editor, a story, have them get back to you four/five months later and say, "hey we are interested in that story you pitched us about such and such and here's the deadline, here's how much we are going to pay you, can you write it for us?"

And then be like, "I don't have that story." So, this situation kind of sucks in the first place, you definitely don't want to be getting those emails in the first place. The best way to not get that email at the end is as your window is eclipsing that you need to hear from this editor in order to potentially be included in the press trip, you are going to change your follow up time line to accommodate that.

Then you are going to send them an email at least twenty-four hours before you need your deadline for getting assignments for the press trip, and you are going to say that, "I haven't heard back from you about this, so I just want to let you know that if I don't hear from you tomorrow..." And then what? Do we threaten them we are going to take it to another magazine? No, because we are not able to go on that trip. So just say "If I don't hear from you tomorrow I assume you are not interested in the piece."

This is really effective because editors do not like when it sounds like you are threatening them to take it somewhere else.

How long do I wait to follow up with an editor? My basic rule of thumb is you send the story, you go to your calendar, you mark in one week or two weeks -Follow Up. And in another one week or two weeks you mark follow up and send new pitch. And you don't think about it and once that day comes up, you follow up and say, "Hi, so and so, I just want to check back in and see if you are interested in this story." That's all you have to say. I often



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

like to end in a question so you could say “I just wanted to check up and see if you’re interested in this story, do you think it’s going to be a fit for your publication?”

Ending with questions can often entice people to respond. There is psychological research on this, so it can be helpful to end all of your email to editors that are pitch oriented with a question.

One week versus two weeks follow up. How do we decide? I choose one and two weeks for a couple reasons. There are situations when an editor is not going to be able to get back to you about a story with even a month window. But, the situations tend to apply to very, very large magazines, and in the case of those magazines if the editor is interested usually by the second follow up they are going to say, “I am trying to figure out if we can use this story but I have an editorial meeting and it isn’t till... I’ll let you know then.”

There is a quote I really like from Peter Fish, he was a travel editor with *Sunset Magazine*, and he said on the topic of how long it takes him respond to a pitch. “If it’s a yes—fifteen minutes, if it’s a no—thirty minutes, if it’s maybe—indefinitely.”

He’s a really nice guy and he doesn’t want to tell a writer that he might use a piece if he’s not going to end up using the piece. This is one of the reasons you sometimes might not be hearing back from people.

In terms of following up one week versus two weeks what makes the difference is how timeline oriented is your story. Does your story have a time peg, like a holiday or anniversary that absolutely needs to go to print by a certain time in order to meet that deadline or publication? If so, that means you are going to have to cycle it much faster, otherwise your story idea is going to go stale.

If you have something that is very timely then that means you have to push up the follow up timeline. One or two weeks is not a metric that I have chosen totally randomly, it’s because most editors will have some sense if they can use that story or not within a one month timeline. But it’s also the preference by editors. If you got to the conferences and people ask editors how long they would prefer us writers to wait before following up with them, that’s what they will typically say.



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

As far as they're concerned, if they haven't seen your story idea because they're busy they also don't like the idea you are at home twiddling your thumbs wondering when will this editor ever get back to me. They're perfectly fine with you sending it again.

But I read this horrible piece of advice and I'm going to tell you so you never, ever do it. I read in a blog post that you should just forward back an email that you had sent to somebody and just write the word "bump" and that's it. Somebody said, "This has an amazing effective response rate." Yeah, getting your email thrown in the trash. So, don't do that. You want to take the email you already wrote and you want to reply, you don't want it to be saying forward. Then make sure the reply is to the editor and not to yourself.

How long do I wait before I send the pitch somewhere else? I heard the most beautiful thing the other day. There's this writer that I know who's really made a good amount of money by auctioning stories, which means she sends them to a bunch of editors the same time, but whoever gets back to her with the best price will get the story. That sounds so scary, right? But, I've said the editors have holes in their magazines they need to fill, and they want to fill them with the best and most interesting stories possible.

If you are having those interesting stories you have the power, not them. They know they need to be on top of it and get the pieces before their competitors do. Then it just comes down to a self-confidence thing, like "oh that person can do it, but that doesn't mean I can do it." I'm not telling you to go out and auction your stories, but that doesn't mean you can't send them to multiple places at once.

Two words about this: should you send the exact same pitch to multiple places at once? I say no but not for the reason you think. I say no, because the same pitch shouldn't fit in every magazine. Magazines that are in the same market differentiate themselves from one another, they have different audiences, they have different tones.

More importantly, your magazine pitches should have a single section of the magazine in mind and that should be in the pitch, the name of the section. You obviously can't send the same exact pitch to different magazines because you have to find a different section to fit into and that's going to change the pitch. With newspapers and with websites it's a little different. Anything with general interest in terms of travel you can send the exact same pitch to different places.



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

The really revelatory thing I heard from this lady the other day who auctions things, she said, “if multiple people get back to you wanting the same story you don’t have to go with the one that got back to you first. Go with the one that’s offering you the most money.”

Can you seriously send pitches to more than one place a time? Doesn’t that “burn a bridge?” Editors understand that you need to sell your stories. If they do get upset about simultaneous submissions these are people you necessarily do not want to work with. I’ve definitely seen editors say things like, “oh I have to be faster getting back to you next time.” Or something like that. In this case if you should indicate you are doing simultaneous submission, I would never put it in your pitch. I would say all editors should assume you are submitting simultaneously and pitching a lot of the stories.

If you do have one that gets “stiffed” I often find they are the one that take eight months to get back to you and they should really know better, they shouldn’t be expecting that you are going to be sitting for eight months not sending this story anywhere else. But if you are really diligent about sending your pitches and checking back in with people regularly and saying, “It seems you are not interested in this story, otherwise let me know.” Then you also don’t have to simultaneously submit, unless they are really time sensitive articles.

Are we bothering editors if we continue to pitch them after they have said no? The answer is absolutely one hundred percent no. The answer is so many people not only go on having assignments but go on having ongoing relationships with editors have the fifth no or at least the third no. My take on this kind of goes back to what I was saying earlier that no can be a great response. First of all, it helps you to have a relationship with the editor by going back and forth.

Second of all, if the editor is continuing to write you back no, rather not writing you back at all then it’s going fine. You just haven’t hit the right idea for them yet. As long as they haven’t stopped responding to you, you just have to keep going.

How Should I Sign Off? I really recommend ending your pitches with a question. “So, would you be interested in this story?” I actually really like the format of “Would you be interested and then the name of the article, for your, and then the name of the magazine and the section.”

Should I link to my blog in the “about me” paragraph? No, so the only time you should mention your blog is when it’s a testament to your expertise for the topic in hand. Also, you shouldn’t be including a bunch of links in your about me paragraph. If an editor wants to see



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

clips let them write back and ask you for them. You should certainly have a link to your portfolio in your signature but the paragraph parts of your pitches should just be that, they should be paragraphs. If you want to hyperlink to past stories you've written that you've mentioned that's fine.

Should I tell the editor I've already written the article? Number one don't write the article first, ever. Unless you are writing essays, if you are writing essays then you have to write the article first. Second, if you have already written the article don't tell that to the editor. Here is why, because editors often rightfully will ask you for some changes to what you had already envisioned for the idea of the story because they know the magazine better than you do. They know their audience better than you do. Not having that flexibility because the story is already written can pretty much give you a guaranteed no, unless it's a very general interest magazine. I always recommend that you give the editor that option to give input on your idea because that is their job. So even if you already have it written, write a pitch for your article idea and send them the pitch, not the full article.

Should I include clips? Should I attach them? You should never attach anything that you are sending to an editor. They often just by company policy are not allowed to open them because they might be spam. Not just the attachment, but your email in the first place because it has attachments. Your pitch should speak for itself in terms of the quality of writing and the quality of your idea, and the quality of being a journalist. I often find that if you put together a good pitch people don't ask you for clips. When they ask you for clips, it's because they are not sure and they tend to not get back to you afterwards. It's a weird catch-22 there.

Should I pitch before my trip or after? You should only be pitching before your trip if you are one hundred percent sure that you are going to get the story. That means it's in your control to get the story and means you are sure the story exists. So, you might want to cover a festival, you have to make sure it's still happening, that you are able to get in, that travelers can get it. Basically, it's everything you thought it would be. Otherwise, you might get screwed getting an assignment that you are not able to fulfill.

How should I negotiate pay? My rule of thumb is when somebody writes you an amount say, "Thank you, is it possible to..." Then make a number that's in some way bigger than what they've given you. Some people double it, some people say, "My rate is..." Even if you like the rate, ask them if it could be higher because often times it can.

What if they ask me to submit something "on spec"? If you don't know what "on spec" means it means on speculation. Speculation meaning doing work you are not sure you are



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Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

going to get paid for yet. When they ask you to submit an article “on spec,” it means that they want you to write the whole story without knowing it’s going to be published and then send it to them. I typically don’t see this work out very well to be honest. My general rule of thumb is to tell people basically “No, I am a working writer and I am not able to work on speculation, if you are able to confirm this assignment I would love to work with you.” And they often do come back and confirm the assignment. It’s typically something they do if you are new and think they can get away with it because it’s not a professional thing to be working on spec.

How soon till I pitch again? If you’ve pitched them and you’ve heard nothing, then on that second follow up you say, “Hey looks like you are not interested in this story, here is another pitch.” And you pitch them again. If they write back to you with some variety of “no,” you say, “Thanks for letting me know, here is another pitch you might be interested in.” So, either within a month, two follow ups, which is two weeks or a month. Or, when you get that response again, that is when you pitch again and if you don’t send it back within an hour or the same day don’t worry about it, it doesn’t even matter if you wait two months, but you shouldn’t, you should strike while the iron is a little hot.

Gabi addresses questions from the chat room...

Question: How do I know which editor at a magazine to pitch? I know it’s important to address the pitch personally, but I’m not sure how to figure out who the right person is.

Answer: So, this is interesting because there’s no hard and fast rule of thumb of who is the right editor at different magazines. There’s so many different titles, in fact I have writers for the Travel Database Magazine find new ones every so often. Even though we have 300+ magazines in there. So, what I tend to try to do is, if there’s a travel editor, great, I’ll pitch the travel editor. If there’s a feature editor and you’re pitching a feature, great, pitch the feature editor. Otherwise look on the totem pole and—again there’s different titles everywhere—if it’s a very small magazine with 3 people – Editor in Chief. If it’s a large magazine, I would go with Associate Editor, if it’s a mid-size magazine with maybe 6 people, I would choose someone in the middle. Don’t choose the Editor in Chief, don’t choose the Editorial Assistant, choose whatever names comes in the middle. In some places the Managing Editor is the assigning editor. In some places the Managing Editor is just the business manager. It’s really hard to know from one magazine to another and it often changes internally. So I would typically pitch somebody in the middle. That’s my best advice for that.

Question: Should you past your original pitch in the follow-up email for reference?



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Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

Answer: Yes, this is why I was saying when you're sending that follow-up you shouldn't just hit reply. You should always put the original pitch in the follow-up. It's an editor's pet peeve that you're asking them to find it again.

Question: When an editor rejects a pitch, is it alright to ask them if there are any specific types of pitches that they are looking for?

Answer: This is one of my favorite things to do. So if you don't have time to write a new pitch right away. You have a sort of favorable response or you have one of these like "this isn't quite a fit" or "we've already covered this" or "we've got something similar that's already in the works?" That's a great time to say the thing that makes editors feel very nice, "Ok, thanks. Do you have a particular need either in a section that you need pitches for a geographic area that you're looking to have stories on that I can help you out with." So that's the phrasing that I use on that and it's really nice because editors are so used to people asking them for things and now you're asking what you can do for them. So it's a good thing to do when you know you're not going to have the time to put together a good pitch for them at the moment.

Question: Should we only pitch to magazines or publications that we are very familiar with?

Answer: So if you want write back what you mean by very familiar, that's helpful But otherwise I'll just run with this. You don't need to read 6 back issue of the magazine in order to pitch them. What you need to do is to be familiar with the tone of the magazine which is why in the Travel Magazine Database we have two tabs that are about the magazine itself and also the audience of the magazine because I think that's something that's often overlooked. And you need to be familiar with the format of the section that you're pitching. But you don't need to know the magazine inside and out. That's the editor's job.

You just need to make sure that you're pitching something they can actually use. So I see a lot of pitches that are going to a magazine but aren't going to a specific section and they aren't really a fit for the magazine because of that. Like the tone right and the topic might be interesting, but the magazine couldn't use it because they only cover a specific demographic area or they just don't cover the area that you want to pitch them. Or they simply don't have a place in their magazine for freelance writers to write a 1500 word feature article that is destination oriented. They only have features that are service oriented – like how to. Or they only have feature articles that are 500 words not 1500 words. So it really helps if you're pitching the editor something that they can use, because if you're pitching them something that they can't use, that is a bit of a turn off for them to work with you in the future. But also



Dream of Travel Writing

Answers to Your Most Common Pitch Questions

it's just kind of silly because of course they're going to have to say no to you, so it's really a waste of time for you to put the pitch together and their time reading it.

Thank you guys so much. If you have any questions that we didn't get through today, let me know. You can e-mail your questions to questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com it's the same email also that all of your webinar reminders and everything have been coming from.