

Fill-in-the-blank Pitches



All pitches are primarily composed of three things:

- the lead/lede or intro
- the outline on how you'll write the piece/what it will be about
- the "I'm so great" (ISG) paragraph or why you should be the one to write it

Step 1: Grab Them with Your Subject Line

"PITCH: _____ [INSERT DESCRIPTIVE TITLE ENCAPSULATING TOPIC] for _____
[INSERT NAME OF SECTION OR DEPARTMENT]"

The title should highlight the unique aspect of your idea, like:

- Unearthing Rare Truffles Under 5 Feet of Snow
- Trend Alert: Skinny Dipping in Piranha-filled Waters
- Forget Lavender—Provence is the New Adventure Sport Capital of France
- Ireland's 12,000-year-old Cheesemaking Tradition

Step 2: Find the Hook – That's Your First Paragraph

Look through your research on this idea—i.e. notes if it's from a trip you've been on or whatever gave you the idea in the first place if it's something you'll research more after you get the assignment—for what made you think this idea was worth writing about:

- Was there **a too-good-to-be-true statistic** that a tour guide dropped that is actually correct? (For instance, "Uzbekistan is the third largest exporter of apricots in the world.")
- Is this **the only thing of its kind** in the world or the country? (i.e. "France has more volcanos than any other Western European country.")
- Was there **one image or experience that stood out so clearly** that you know someone else would want to replicate it? (like "on the super secret behind-the-scenes tour of Grand Central you can enter a place typically reserved only for the standing president of the United States.")

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Write that down in one to two sentences (preferably no more than 50 to 100 words):

That's your lead.

Step 3: Show the Editor How You Will Write The Piece

Scan a recent article in the same section in the magazine and make notes on:

- the word count
- the style (is it first person? third person reported? catchy and salesy? newsy and dry? full of buzzwords or local lingo for color?)
- the number of interviews (if any)
- the structure (is it in sections like a round-up? is there an info box?)

Fill in the blanks:

In this ___-word _____ (style of piece: feature, interview, profile, destination piece, round-up, etc.), I will show readers _____ [chose one]:

- [INSERT THREE NEAT THINGS ABOUT YOUR DESTINATION/HOW TO TRAVEL THERE] for services pieces
- [TEASE THREE UNUSUAL THINGS ABOUT YOUR SUBJECT] for profiles or short front of book pieces on new places or things
- [HIGHLIGHT THREE THINGS THAT WILL BE IN YOUR ROUND-UP AND WHY EACH IS IMPORTANT] for round-up magazine articles or list blog posts

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Step 3: Show the Editor Why You Are the Right Person to Write This Piece

My writing has appeared in _____, _____, and _____, [INSERT THE BIGGEST NAMES YOU HAVE IN YOUR PORTFOLIO FOR THE FIRST TWO AND SOMETHING SPECIALIZED TO THIS PIECE'S TOPIC FOR THE LAST ONE IF POSSIBLE] and _____ [INSERT WHATEVER SPECIAL CONNECTION YOU HAVE TO THIS ARTICLE IN TERMS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE].

Examples for the second blank are things like: I've just returned from trekking in Borneo (for a piece about independent travel in Borneo); I'm a certified sommelier (for a piece about Israel's new wine regions); I've been mountain biking for 25 years (for a profile on the top female mountain biker in the world). Don't take more than two minutes on this. It should take 20 seconds.