

ELEMENTS OF WRITING A PITCH LETTER

What is a pitch letter?

A pitch letter can start off as a question or an interesting fact that relates your chapter to your target audience. For instance, if you were writing for a magazine for a local classical radio station, you could start off "Did you know that more people hear live music played on an organ every week than on any other instrument?" Then lead into your pitch: "Did you know that the organ is the world's oldest musical instrument?"

Make your letter no longer than one page and include your telephone number so the reporter can contact you. Sometimes pitches are written to accompany press releases, media advisories or even full press kits.

How is it used?

Pitch letters serve one purpose -- to pique the journalist's interest in your story. They needn't tell the whole story. Rather, they are "teasers" for the meat of your story angle.

What does it look like?

Regular business letter formatting is fine.

What should I put in my pitch letter?

Start off with your best shot. In the first sentence, try to give the reporter something that will provoke a reaction such as "Gee, I never knew that" or "That's an interesting angle for a story." Or better yet try to get the reporter to think both things! Don't worry about formalities, and don't bury your angle in hype.

Target your pitch

Even if you have only one version of a press release, you can still target your pitch to a particular media outlet by crafting a specific pitch letter. The purpose of the pitch letter in this case is to frame the story in a way that makes it clear to the journalist that it fits in with that media outlet's approach.