



Guidelines for a Successful Op-Ed Pitch

A pitch is an opportunity for you to give an editor a condensed sense of your writing without them having to read your entire piece. For that reason, a good pitch should have the same style and tone as the piece you have written. Unless otherwise noted, all op-eds should contain a pitch.

Before writing your pitch, read the guidelines for the specific publication you want to pitch. Make sure your pitch and proposed piece meet their requirements. Certain publications like The Guardian do not want you to start writing your piece until they approve your pitch, but most require that the article be included below your pitch.

Here are some recommendations for how to structure your pitch

1. The e-mail subject line for your pitch should say “PITCH” and then include the headline.
2. Your first paragraph should give the editor a clear sense of what you intend to write. What is the topic of your opinion? What is the theme? This should also give the editor a clear sense of the style and tone of your writing.
3. Your second paragraph should give the editor a sense of how you intend to substantiate the argument in your piece. This is not an opportunity to write the whole piece. Rather, it is an opportunity to show the editor how you will connect the topic of your piece, which is often a hook-worthy instance in the news, to a deeper theme.
4. Your third paragraph should establish your own qualifications for writing the piece. Why are you the best person to write this piece? Much of this will already be clear to the editor based on your argument. After all, many unique arguments shouldn't require credentials. Good writing matters most. But for many topics, your background can be the last little bit an editor needs to be persuaded to take your piece. Have you published elsewhere? Do you have relevant work or educational or life experience?

Additional tips

The best days to pitch are usually Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but if a pitch is time-sensitive, you can send it at any point. If your piece is time sensitive, it is okay to tell the editor that you intend to follow-up in 24 or 48 hours, and if they have not responded by that time, you can rescind the piece and pitch it elsewhere.

The one thing you should not do is submit to multiple publications at once unless the publications specifically allow for it. Most do not, and it is a cardinal sin to make a simultaneous pitch when a publisher does not allow them.

Have other pitches at the ready in case an editor says, “We’ll pass on this, but I like the way you’re thinking about things. What else do you have?”

Always thank the editor for their time and consideration of your piece.

Sample Pitch Letter

E-mail Subject Line: PITCH: Winning the White House? Pick Sherrod Brown.

Dear Ms. Hearst

In the discussion surrounding Joe Biden's vice presidential pick, an important name is being forgotten: Sherrod Brown. Yes, Biden has promised to pick a woman, but if not for his gender, Brown would be the ideal VP candidate. I would like to advance this argument in an op-ed for The Los Angeles Examiner.

Sherrod Brown's progressive populism is the perfect antidote to Donald Trump. Unlike other Democrats, Brown has not allowed himself to be dragged into identity politics or the culture wars. Instead, he has remained laser-focused on economic issues. As a native Midwesterner, I understand what has made Brown successful in Obama-Trump country. I also know that these qualities, if placed on the ticket, would allow Democrats to reclaim the White House in the upcoming election.

I am currently a Masters in Public Policy candidate at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) of Government. I served as an economic policy advisor to the Robert La Follette campaign, and before coming to HKS, I worked at a left-of-center policy think tank. The Los Angeles Examiner's enthusiasm for analytical content, openness to push back against the status quo, and emphasis on economic inequality make it the ideal outlet for this column.

Please let me know of your interest before Friday morning. If I haven't heard from you by then, I will send a follow-up message to double-check your interest before moving to other publications.

Best,

Noel Brooks

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