



Pitching Tips and Principles

Pitching Reporters Tips and Principles

1. Keep it Short and Sexy
2. Pitching Principles
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1. In General, Keep it Short, Keep it Sexy!

Reporters are busy people. When you call them, you have about 15 seconds to knock their socks off with your story idea. Have your pitch, or script of what you're planning to say, prepared in advance, and stick to the most exciting elements of the story, the things that will pique the reporters' interest the most. That includes VIP speakers, great visuals, an unusual coalition working together, etc.

For instance, if you're pitching a rally and you have the Governor coming, say that up front because it is the biggest highlight of the event!

"Hi! I'm _____ with the Sierra Club and I wanted to invite you to attend our Rally for Wilderness event with the Governor this Friday. Do you have a quick minute?"

If a reporter is interested, they'll ask for more info. In the meantime, send them a news advisory that includes all the relevant details, and plan a follow-up call with them to answer any questions that may have come up!

2. Principles of Pitching

Know who you're pitching.

Do your research. Reporters have beats, but it's not enough to just know what the reporters' beat is. Look up past stories they have written so you know what they like to cover. If you can make it seem like the story you are pitching is tailored to what that reporter likes to cover, you will be more successful.

In order to be a good producer of news, learn to be a good reader/viewer of news.

When you see a good story—even if it's not from your typical enviro reporter—email that reporter to let them know you think they did a good job, and attach your signature at the bottom. Reporters are human just like the rest of us, and they have egos. They get some hate mail but not much fan mail. Sending a quick email is a good way to build relationships.

Even an environmental reporter has their preferences.

There are only two ways to find out what someone likes to write about—by reading them, and by asking them. If you haven't already done this, don't hesitate to just come out and

ask, “Generally, how do you decide what you are going to write about? What kinds of stories are you and/or your editors looking for?”

You’re doing them a favor—you’re not asking for help.

It’s easier to show them this when you know what they like to cover. Reporters need you, because you are the one who can give them the story they are looking to write. Make the reporter feel like you are familiar with their work and you are pitching them something that is right up their alley.

As soon as you have the reporters’ ear, they are already thinking about how they are going to get the story past their editors.

Reporters have to pitch stories to their editors. If you present a thoughtful, well-organized pitch, the reporter can often use the same pitch to pass the idea by their higher-ups. Hand the story to them—make it as easy as possible. Let them know what useful materials you can send.

3. Key Phrases to use:

When writing out your pitch, these key phrases will help you get an idea of what your pitch should sound like.

“Are you on deadline, or do you have a quick second?”

-Say this in the very beginning after you introduce yourself. It shows them that you are considerate of their timeline, and you can make it quick.

“I saw that great article you did on X...”

-Reporters are people too! They’ll appreciate that you are familiar with their work. Plus, who doesn’t like a nice complement every now and then, right?

“I wanted to give you the heads up on an interesting story idea...it seemed like it would be right up your alley.”

-This shows that you are doing them a favor, not begging them to help you.

“Does this sound like the kind of thing you’d be interested in covering?”

At the end of your pitch, this is a good way to end the conversation. If the reporter says no, that is a great opportunity for you to ask, “Well, what kinds of stories are you interested in covering?” and figure out if there’s a different angle to your story that might work.