

Pitching to Agents & Publishers Handout

Congratulations! It's scary to take the book you've been working on for so long, in private, and proclaim to the world: Here I am! So now what? Get your book into the hands of readers! Your choices: Large/Medium publishing houses (most require agent) or Indie/Self-Publishing.

Goals:

From concept to publication requires many steps. A pitch is just the 1st stepping stone on your path. Each step is designed for more engagement.

Pitch—>Query Letter—>Request for Synopsis & First Pages/Chapters—>Potential Representation

Pitches:

Introduce the author

Working title & Genre

Comps (if relevant)

Allow time for a conversation with the agent/publisher

Elevator Pitch (3 minutes or less):

It's a sentence or two that encapsulates what is great about your story, makes an agent want to hear more, and it has to be *really* short (50 words MAX), so cut out *anything* irrelevant.

Key Components:

1. Reveal your protagonist—motives, goals, something unique.
1. Convey the major conflict/plot point.
2. Provide a hook/why the reader should care.

Another Way to Think of it:

Sentence 1: Character name, vocation, and opening situation.

Sentence 2: "But when..." lays out the turning point in the story, the central conflict or inciting incident that pushes the protagonist into the conflict.

Sentence 3: "Now..." lays out the stakes and crisis the protagonist faces.

How to Make Your Pitch Stand Out:

1. Use Cultural References to Your Advantage. Unique comps that mix genres (books vs movie, etc.) But don't include comps that don't capture the spirit of your book.
2. Focus on the Stakes. Emotional stories require protagonist overcoming an obstacle.
3. Every Word Should Count: pay attention to verbs ("must decide" is stronger than "wants", "confronts" is stronger than "thinks"). Use power verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
4. Use interesting combinations of strange things/characteristics & wacky settings.
5. Lots of pitch opportunities: conferences (SFWC, ThrillerFest, etc.), online pitch parties on Twitter—book distilled down to 280 characters (#PitMad, #DVPit, search #genre pitch parties), Women's National Book Association (WNBA) SF Chapter Pitch-O-Rama (April 29, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Zoom To register, go to: <https://wnba-sfchapter.org/save-the-date-register-for-virtual-pitch-o-rama-2023/>).
6. Just Keep Trying. You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.

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