

Pitch Basics and All-Purpose Pitch Template

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- One page, personalized.
- Enclosures IF needed.
- Positive, factual, courteous.
- Talk to “you.”
- Make one point, not multiple.
- Tell when you’ll call.
- Tell where/when you can be reached.
- No “wind up,” get to point.
- 5 W’s at the outset; summarize them in first few sentences.
- Convey perspective, provoke a little controversy.
- Don’t forget the “ask” and don’t forget to tell them when you’ll call, e.g., “early next week,” “Monday.”
- Include contact information 24/7.

All-Purpose Template *Copyright Don Bates 2013*

Intended to help PR writers as follows:

- Compose written media requests brief as possible, clear, persuasive.
- Write, distribute pitches without unnecessary delays.
- Eliminate verbosity and client-centered pomposity.
- Make easier for media to use.
- Increase written pitching success.

In sum, template reflects norms of PR practice and what editors/reporters prefer in “pitches,” i.e., get to the point, tell me what you want, make it easy for me to say yes or no.

Template Basics

1. Use personal salutation [NOT DEAR EDITOR OR REPORTER]:

Dear Mr. or Ms. [NAME]:

2. Use direct lead and make the “ask”:

I invite you to interview* Ms. Subject, [PROFESSIONAL TITLE/I.D.]. She is a/the [CITE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC].

3. Summarize what Ms. Subject wants to discuss:

Ms. Subject would like to discuss/is concerned/believes/thinks/etc. [CITE PROBLEM, CHALLENGE, VIEW]

4. Amplify Ms. Subject’s concern with a few incisive specifics:

More specifically, she thinks [ADD RUN-IN OR BULLETED ITEMS].

5. Clarify attachments/enclosures if you use:

Attached [or enclosed] is/are [DESCRIBE DOCUMENTS RELATED TO YOUR REQUEST, INVITATION – E.G., SURVEY REPORT OR SPEECH].

6. Call for action:

I will call you [TIME, DATE – E.G., NEXT MONDAY, NEXT WEEK, FRIDAY] to discuss this interview.

7. Close:

Sincerely [INCLUDE 24/7 CONTACT INFORMATION WITH NAME/TITLE/ETC.]

* **Examples of other “asks”:** to cover event, tour facility, test product, visit offices, present award, speak at conference.

Email pitch based on Bates template

SUBJECT LINE (headline, in effect): Poor writing undermines private and public interests.

Dear Ms. Dowd:

I invite you to interview Don Bates, New York University writing instructor. Prof. Bates is disturbed with the quality of writing among most public relations and public affairs practitioners in business, government and the not-for-profit sectors.

Using his classes, research and workshops as evidence – along with more than 40 years’ experience in the PR/PA trenches – he says too many practitioners fail to convey news and other information with the straightforward style and credible content their audiences want and need. Too much of what they write is stuffed with fluff or worse. He knows why and has antidotes he says are almost embarrassing to discuss.

Prof. Bates wants to change the way PR/PA practitioners write so they’ll do a better job of helping their clients and the people they’re trying to reach. “By writing more simply, directly and credibly, they’ll also help to change their image as ‘spin’ masters,” he adds. “Most are not, but the poor quality of their writing makes it easy to assume they are.”

The attached editorial is from Prof. Bates’s blog – writingRX.tumblr.com. It summarizes his views on what’s wrong with most news releases and, by extension, PR/PA writing in general.

I will call you next week to discuss your interest in talking to Prof. Bates. In the meantime, you may contact him at 917-913-8940 or db155@nyu.edu.

Sincerely,
NAME
TITLE
AFFILIATION
PHONE
EMAIL