

Pitch Letters

Pitch Letters are used to attract attention to an event or activity. Pitch letters are not the same as news releases. Essentially, the difference between the two is that news releases are about “hard news” (such as what is found in the first section of the newspaper) while pitch letters are about “soft news” (such as what is found in the community, religion, gardening, cooking, sports, travel, home, etc., sections).

Pitch letters must pitch several (2–3) “story ideas.” To be effective, they must offer suggestions for stories that would interest the sources readers, listeners, viewers, be easy to do, involve pictures/video appropriate for newspaper, television, magazine, etc., and involve support on your part.

Pitch letters, in contrast to news releases, involve some minor development of a “story” idea. They are creative as well as strategic. News releases report newsworthy events, people, processes, etc. but do not include elaboration on the story.

Pitch letters, in contrast to news releases, which follow very strict formatting rules, should resemble a standard business letter. Pitch letters should be single spaced, have standard one-inch margins, and should be kept to a single page. Place information about your organization at the top of the document (name, address, telephones, etc.); place the date under this on the top left; place the address of the person you are writing below that; and finally, include a greeting (dear Mr/Ms. X...). At the end of the letter, type a closing phrase (cordially, sincerely, earnestly, etc.), put in three single spaces, and type your name and title.

Pitch Letter Criteria

- Opening sentence reveals who you are, creates interest in the topic and your client, and previews your story ideas (yes, do all these things in a few carefully worded sentences).
- Several story angles presented in the body of the letter.
- Statements are accurate, and realistic.
- You offer yourself as a resource and/or other organizational members.
- Grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation are correct.
- Final sentence anchors your claim that your ideas are newsworthy.