



Pitching Best Practices

by Kang-Chun Cheng (KC)

For journalists:

1. Introduce yourself in a sentence or two about what you cover, linking to your previous work. Ideally, you have a personal connection to the editor (e.g. also a member of Uproot, editor at Al Jazeera suggested I get in touch), or even you saw some work they've previously run (e.g. love the recent explainers about COP28 – perhaps this could help expand your coverage). You're trying to make the recipient feel that this is a bespoke pitch and that you've really thought about why this story may be a good fit!
2. Capture the heart of your story in a few sentences, mention if there's a time peg or an evergreen story, and why it's a good fit for the publication's readers (e.g. this solutions-oriented story – told from the underreported angle of Indigenous communities – is exactly the type of story that NPR's Goats and Soda column tends to run).
3. Sign off and include the more extensive pitch below in the body of the email – not as an attachment! (If pitching as a photo essay or features + accompanying photos, attach 4-6 low res images and explain that this is for visual reference. If the editor is interested, they may ask to see more.) You want to streamline the process so it's as easy to access as possible.
4. Now, it's time to expand on the **nutgraf** – a short paragraph that summarizes the main points of the story at hand – a bit more – can you hyperlink your pitch with data/existing research to illuminate scale or connect it with a broader phenomenon, or include quotes from an expert to show that you've done some pre-reporting? Check on the specific requirements of the outlet, most are fine with hyperlinks, some are not.
5. Include the scope by which you envision your story!
6. For stories that include ground reporting, include details about logistics and security if relevant (e.g. fly from Nairobi to Lodwar, 4-day reporting trip to access the different locations of Lokichar and Kapedo, will require a car hire at X/day and X in guide fees).
7. Consider pitching to multiple outlets, especially if it's a story big enough to publish in different forms (feature, photo essay). At the same time, be discerning and realistic with how many different iterations of a story you can do with fresh sources or quotes, if need be.

For editors:

1. Remember that at the other end of the pitch is a person who is excited by the prospect of working with you! Editorial schedules can be finicky and difficult to control, but clear and transparent communication should be the baseline.

2. If the story is interesting but not quite the angle or framing you're interested in, take a quick look at their portfolio to see if you can meet somewhere in the middle.
3. Avoid stringing along the journalist – – most likely a freelancer – – as much as possible. If you double-book a photographer or a story falls through for editorial reasons, be transparent and communicative.

Your Personal Pitch Checklist

- ☐ Introduced myself & linked to previous work
- ☐ Captured the heart of my story & why it's a good fit for the publication
- ☐ Expanded on the nutgraf
- ☐ Included the scope
- ☐ Noted the details and logistics
- ☐ Pitched to other outlets