

## Selling You and Your Idea in 30 Seconds: The Parts of a Perfect Pitch

A pitch is an oral query letter. Pitching a book takes less than thirty seconds. The goal: generate maximum excitement in as few words as possible. Without being self-serving, you must capture the essence of your book, why it will appeal to book buyers, and what's most impressive about your platform, promotion plan, and credentials.

Books are usually either prose-driven like novels and memoirs or promotion-driven like how-to books. Platform and promotion aren't as important for novels and memoirs, or for academic presses, or small, niche, university presses, or midsize houses outside of New York.

Five parts of a pitch are optional; you may not need them. Here's how to excite agents and editors at Big Apple houses:

- (Optional) A novel or narrative nonfiction book, such as a memoir, requires a hook: two or three sentences about the time, setting and story.
- A sentence with the title (and subtitle, if needed), the kind of book it is, and up to fifteen words that prove your book is unique and salable
- The model(s) for your book: one or two books, movies, or authors--“It's *The Tipping Point* meets *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.”
- The most impressive aspect of your platform: what you're doing to give yourself continuing visibility on the subject, online or off, with potential book buyers, and if the number is impressive, how many of them, and where. Wrong: “I give talks.” Right: “I give X talks a year to Y people in major markets.”
- The most impressive, believable one-to-three things you will do to promote your book, online or off, and how many of them, if the number is impressive.
- The number of pages in a proposal for a nonfiction book
- The number or estimated number of words in the manuscript
- (Optional) The names, and if necessary identification, of the most impressive people who will provide a foreword and/or cover quotes
- (Optional) If it's the first in a series, a list of up to three titles in order of salability.
- (Optional) Information about a self-published edition that will help sell it
- Your most impressive credentials: your track record; experience in your field; years of research; prizes; contests; awards
- (Optional) Anything else that will impress agents or editors

Like the overview of your proposal, these elements are the building blocks of your pitch. Arrange them in whatever order will give them the most impact. *How to Write a Book Proposal* discusses platform and promotion.

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