



Pitch Perfect:

Your Guide for Pitching to a Literary Agent

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What is a practice pitch?

A practice pitch is a short (typically 10-minute) session with a literary agent who reviews your work and offers advice on how to craft a persuasive sales pitch for it.

Before the Practice Pitch

1. Have a manuscript that is **complete** and **nearly ready** for publication (fiction) or a complete book proposal (nonfiction).
2. Fiction pitches should contain setup, hook, and resolution:

When <character> discovers <catalyst>; s/he must <overcome problem> before <impending doom>, or else <stakes>.

3. Nonfiction pitches should include the book title, the main concept, a brief statement explaining why you're the person to write the book, and your plans for promotion.
4. Summarize your project in 4-5 sentences. Then practice, practice, and practice some more. Make sure you can deliver your pitch smoothly with as much confidence as you can muster.
5. Do your homework. Know about the agency. Find answers for the following questions:
 - Which publisher is the best fit for your book?
 - Who is your audience?
 - Is there an author you can honestly compare yourself to? Why?
 - Why is your book unique?
6. Be selective about the agent you select for a practice pitch. Don't give the impression you are so desperate to get your work published that you'll take the first agent you can get. Come prepared with questions to ask the agent, but do your research first. Ask questions the agent hasn't already answered elsewhere.



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During the Practice Pitch

7. The two most important rules are: be brief and be clear.
8. The purpose of the practice pitch is to entice an agent—possibly this one, but more likely another one in the future—to read your work. Don't spend the time chatting. You paid for the session, so get right to the point. Try to convince the agent that your book must be published.
9. Nerves are normal; remember, agents have to pitch their clients' works to editors. They know how scary the process can be. Resist the urge to verbalize your anxiety; this is definitely a time for the "fake it until you make it" approach.
10. You're never just selling a book; you're also selling yourself as an author. Promote yourself through your interpersonal skills, professionalism, and preparation. If your manuscript is truly at the pitch stage—complete, well written, and attractive to readers—you'll be way ahead of most of the other writers who have reserved practice pitches.
11. Bring a synopsis to leave with the agent if asked.
12. Be prepared to take criticism with grace. This is an important part of being a professional writer. The feedback alone is incredibly valuable. It's coming from an expert, after all.
13. Expect to be turned down. Agents seldom offer representation based on practice pitches.
14. Don't feel the need to fill the allotted time. Once you've made your pitch, gotten a business card, and said what you need to say, thank the agent and go.
15. Immediately after your pitch practice, make notes about what was discussed, including any connection you made with the agent. This helps with the last stage:

After the Practice Pitch

16. Send the agent a thank you note.
17. Follow your end-of-meeting plan, which might simply be not to submit to this agent.



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