

Writing a Pitch Letter



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Design Document

Project Description

General Overview

This project involves creating an in-person workshop for undergraduate students in Rutgers University’s Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) program. During the 80-minute workshop, students will learn how to write a pitch letter. A pitch letter is an email sent by a writer to an editor of a newspaper, magazine, or online news site. This letter acts as a proposal for a story the sender wants to write. It must include the story idea, information about its relevance to the audience of the publication, a discussion of why the idea is timely, details on what will be executed (word length, style of story), information about any extras (such as an timelines or maps), and reasons why the person making the pitch is the ideal author.

The workshop will launch in Fall 2018, with a small group enrolled in a course called Health and Science Writing. This is a senior level course, usually taken by third and fourth year students. The workshop will be reused in the Spring 2019 semester for another senior elective called Media Publishing and Design. The module will be revised after each implementation based on feedback. Ultimately, this lesson will be added to a mandatory sophomore course called Writing for Media, so that 100 percent of JMS graduates will know how to write a pitch letter by 2021.

Gap Analysis

Desired Status	-	Actual Status	=	Need
All Rutgers JMS undergraduates students demonstrate their knowledge of the essential elements of a pitch letter (story idea, relevance, timeliness, execution, extras, author), the correct length, and tone by completing at least one pitch letter before graduation.	-	An online poll of JMS alumni found that only 28 percent said they wrote a pitch letter while in the program and were taught the essential elements of such a letter (story idea, relevance, timeliness, execution, extras, author), the correct length, and tone.	=	An estimated 72 percent of Rutgers JMS undergraduates need to be taught and to demonstrate the essential elements of a pitch letter (story idea, relevance, timeliness, execution, extras, author), the correct length, and tone by completing at least one pitch letter before graduation, with a grade of at least 70 percent.

Approach Used to Identify the Goal: Subject Matter Expert

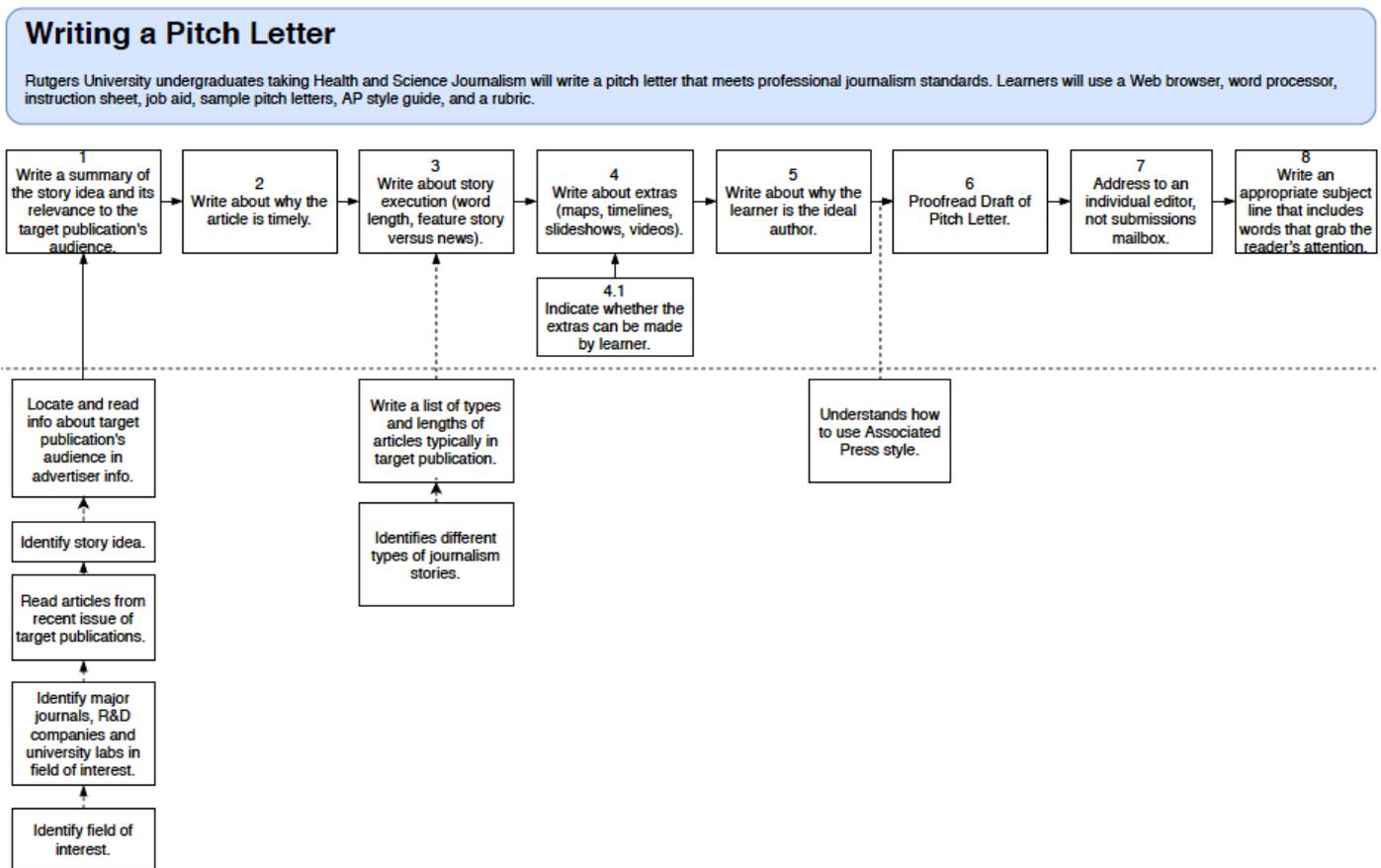
This goal was identified by myself and my supervisor. We are both subject matter experts: former journalists who now teach journalism. According to a recent survey of 54 JMS alumni, the majority of alumni surveyed had not been taught how to write a pitch letter before they graduated (Kremen, June 25, 2018). Other subject matter experts –MIT Knight Science Journalism fellows – were consulted a month later via Facebook. These professionals, who work as science writers, concurred that the skill is still an essential for modern journalists.

Instructional Goal

Rutgers University undergraduates in the Journalism and Media Studies program will write a pitch letter that meets professional journalism standards as part of their course work for the class Health and Science Journalism. Learners will use a Web browser and Word processor of their choice, as well as a job aid, sample pitch letters, an AP Style guide, and a rubric.

Goal Analysis Diagram

(Larger version available at <https://tinyurl.com/yb8ah2le>.)



Learner Analysis

Learners are juniors and seniors enrolled in Rutgers University's Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) program. Most come directly from high school and are local to New Jersey. While the intellectual abilities of these students varies, the majority are average performers in terms of writing ability and cognitive skills. Most balance at least one job in addition to school, so they have little time to spare. They tend to put in minimal effort unless an activity is graded and do

best with explicit assignment instructions and rubrics. While their attitude toward Rutgers administration tends to be negative, surveys show they have high regard for their professors (Miller & Kremen, 2018). Rutgers has yet to solicit student opinion regarding their new content management tool, Canvas, but this assignment sparked interest in such a survey. One is now slated for Fall 2018.

Information Strategies	Data Sources	Learner Characteristics
1. Entry skills	Rutgers JMS course catalog	Learners must have successfully completed two writing courses: 1) Writing for Media: a sophomore course that covers several types of journalism; and 2) Digital News Writing: a junior course that focuses on daily news reporting for the Web; or 3) Broadcast News Writing: a junior course where students learn how to create TV news stories.
2. Prior Knowledge of topic area	- Survey of 54 JMS alumni via Facebook (Kremen, June 25, 2018) - Online conversations with alumni June and July, 2018	Of the alumni surveyed, 70 percent report that they were not taught how to write a pitch letter before they graduated from Rutgers. These students had no knowledge of the content area and had to teach themselves the skill after graduating, by reading about pitch letters from online sources.
3. Attitudes toward content	Executive Summary: JMS Program Goals Survey (Stoerger, 2018)	Several students expressed a desire to learn practical and foundational skills. Writing a pitch letter meets both criteria.
4. Attitudes toward potential delivery system	Not available.	Not available.
5. Motivation for instruction	- Executive Summary: JMS Program Goals Survey (Stoerger, 2018)	The majority of learners report enrolling in JMS to gain practical skills they can use as a professional journalist.
6. Educational and ability levels	- Undergraduate Student Services Coordinator Meghan Ingstrup,	Education level: 94 percent of JMS majors are traditional, meaning they come to Rutgers directly from high

	<p>personal communications, July 20, 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JMS Assessment Report AY 2017-18 (Miller & Kremen, 2018) - Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers and two years of teaching at a highly competitive journalism program 	<p>school or transfer from another college.</p> <p>Ability level: Students apply to JMS after completing their freshman Rutgers School of Arts and Science. All who apply are accepted. Consequently, JMS students tend to be those who were not accepted into a more competitive journalism program. These students tend to require more guidance.</p>
7. General learning preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some students expressed a desire for detailed rubrics so that grading doesn't appear arbitrary. - JMS students put more effort into assignments and assessments that graded, even if it is only worth one percent of their final mark.
8. Attitudes toward training organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Executive Summary: JMS Program Goals Survey (Stoerger, 2018) - Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some students report that JMS professors are the best they had during their time at Rutgers. - Administrative staff are not well liked. Students frequently report poor guidance from academic counsellors, in particular.
9. General group characteristics: Heterogeneity, size and overall impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate Student Services Coordinator Meghan Ingstrup, personal communications, July 20, 2018 - JMS Assessment Report AY 2017-18 (Miller & Kremen, 2018) - Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 91 percent of JMS majors were born in New Jersey; - 65 percent of JMS majors are female - Average age is 21.4, age range is 17 to 29 years old - Each class consists of 8 to 20 students, who elected to take the course - JMS has a total of 120 – 220 students per year

		- While a range of skill levels are present in each class, most are average students who require considerable guidance and explicit assignment objectives.
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Learning Context

Students will be working in a standard university classroom that is designed to hold between 25 and 40 people, depending on the room. Classrooms feature digital projection equipment tied to a podium-mounted computer with a touch screen. Each room has either whiteboards or blackboards. The small desks provided are movable, which makes it easy to structure the room for small group work. The rooms also tend to be slightly larger than necessary for our maximum class size of 20 students, which means there is also ample room for students to work independently for the posttest. Consequently, the classroom should easily be able to mimic the important elements of the performance context.

Information Strategies	Data Sources	Learning Site Characteristics
Number/nature of sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information from Rutgers Digital Classroom Services Website. - Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers 	<p>Number: There are approximately 15 classrooms available. (The number varies somewhat depending on ongoing construction.)</p> <p>Facilities: The in-person instruction happens in rooms that seat a maximum of 40 people, with movable seating. Some learning also takes place at home, in between classes, via Canvas.</p> <p>Equipment: All classrooms have a projection system for the instructor tied to a dual boot Mac/PC touch screen terminal with keyboard, microphone, speakers and a flatbed document camera. Every classroom also features whiteboards or blackboards.</p> <p>Resources: There is no special allocation for the redevelopment or instruction of this</p>

		<p>course. Professors are given an annual budget of \$5,000 but those funds are also for conference attendance and technology purchases, such as a professor's laptop or an in- office printer.</p> <p>Constraints: Classrooms feature very small desks that cannot fit both a laptop and a piece of paper simultaneously.</p>
<p>Site compatibility with instructional needs</p>	<p>- Information from Rutgers Digital Classroom Services Website</p> <p>- Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers</p>	<p>Instructional strategy: A variety of strategies can be used, including lectures, demonstrations, small group work, whole-class discussions, individual work (on paper or laptop), videos, whole-class or small-group games and activities. This module will involve lecture, whole-class discussions, individual work and small group activities.</p> <p>Delivery approaches: Content will largely be delivered in person but online, at home instruction is also possible via Canvas.</p> <p>Time: Each class is 1 hour and 20 minutes long. There are a total of 24 classes spread out over 12 weeks. A good professor to student ratio (1:20), typically means students get ample time with professors in class. Professors also dedicate at least one hour per week, per course to office hours, in addition to many hours per week of online support via email and video chat.</p> <p>Personnel: One professor per class.</p>

<p>Site compatibility with learner needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information from Rutgers Digital Classroom Services Website. - Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers 	<p>Location (distance): The classrooms are all located along College Avenue, which makes them easy to access for students who live on campus, park in the College Avenue student lots, or commute via train.</p> <p>Convenience: Cafeterias and restaurants are located all along College Avenue. Vending machines are located in the main Journalism and Media Studies building and the Academic Building.</p> <p>Space: The classrooms are well suited in terms of size. We aim to have no more than 20 students per class and the rooms fit 25 – 40 students. This leaves enough room to rearrange desks for games and small group activities, without making the space feel empty during lectures.</p> <p>Equipment: Students typically bring their own laptop to class when requested by the instructor. Loaner laptops are also available for students during class time but are seldom needed.</p>
<p>Feasibility for simulating workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information from Rutgers Digital Classroom Services Website. - Personal observations from four years of teaching at Rutgers - Personal observations from more than 10 years as a professional journalist 	<p>Supervisory characteristics: Once in the workforce, learners will often be working independently, from home and therefore have little supervisory support. They would be able to refer to a job aid. Others will be working in an office setting but crafting the pitch letter is normally done without any supervision. Typically, the first time the learner will discuss the story idea with a supervisor is by emailing them the completed letter.</p>

		<p>Physical characteristics: The classroom desks are considerably smaller than what most learners will ultimately use in a home office or job site.</p> <p>Social characteristics: While professional journalists occasionally consult trusted peers to discuss story ideas while they are in the process of gathering and refining ideas for pitch letters, the letter itself is always written solo. It is therefore imperative that the posttest involve an individual assessment.</p>
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Performance Context

Professional freelancer journalists typically write pitch letters from their home office, using a computer and an AP Style guide. Staff journalists typically work at a desk in an open-concept office using the same tools as their freelance counterpart. A job aid could be consulted by a freelance or staff journalist, but no such document appears to have been made prior to the one created for this project.

It's uncommon for a freelancer or a staff journalist to ask a colleague for advice on a story idea before it is sold, due to the competitive nature of the field. Consequently, pitch letters tend to be written without the consultation of other professionals. Managers tend not to get involved until the pitch is fully formed.

Information Strategies	Data Sources	Performance Site Characteristics
1. Managerial/supervisory support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal experience from working in newsrooms for more than 10 years - Interview with director of undergraduate program for JMS 	<p>Reward system: A successful pitch letter results in two intrinsic rewards for professional journalists: 1) income from the sale of the article; 2) an increase in future career opportunities, particularly with the same publication.</p> <p>Amount and nature of direct supervision: There is typically no</p>

		<p>supervision during the pitch letter writing process.</p> <p>Evidence of supervisor commitment: Not applicable, as there is no supervision.</p>
2. Physical aspects of site	- Personal experience from working in newsrooms for more than 10 years	<p>Facilities: Staff writers might have their own office or work at a desk in an open layout. Freelancers typically work from home offices.</p> <p>Resources: A style guide and job aids would all be available.</p> <p>Equipment: A laptop and printer is all that is needed in terms of technology.</p> <p>Training: Professional journalists are expected to already know how to write a pitch letter. There is no training program for this skill once you are in the work force.</p>
3. Social aspects of site	- Personal experience from working in newsrooms for more than 10 years	<p>Supervision: Staff writers might discuss story ideas with a supervisor before formally pitching the idea but this rarely occurs. Normally, the first a supervisor hears about a story idea is from the formal pitch.</p> <p>Interaction: Journalists might discuss story ideas with trusted peers, though this is not the norm as many fear their ideas will be stolen.</p> <p>Others using skills effectively: Book authors also write pitch letters, using the same general criteria.</p>
4. Relevance of skills to workplace	- Survey of 19 self-selected JMS alumni via Facebook (Kremen, July 20, 2018)	Meet identified needs: All of the Knights and JMS alumni surveyed said this skill remains relevant. The Knights were also shown copies of the proposed job aid and they said it covered all aspects of a good pitch.

	<p>- Facebook discussion with three MIT Knight Science Journalism fellows, July 20, 2018</p>	<p>Current applications: The majority of those consulted said this skill remains relevant.</p> <p>Future applications: Those consulted all agreed that pitch letters will likely remain an important skill for journalists.</p>
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Performance Objectives

Main Instructional Goal	Terminal Objective
<p>Rutgers University undergraduates taking Health and Science Journalism will write a pitch letter that meets professional journalism standards. Learners will use a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric.</p>	<p>Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), Rutgers University undergraduates taking Health and Science Journalism will write a pitch letter (B) that includes: 1) the crux of the story idea 2) information about its relevance to the publication’s audience, timeliness, execution, and extras; 3) why the author is ideal; 3) no errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).</p>
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
<p>1. Write about the crux of the story idea and its relevance of the audience to the audience of the target publication.</p>	<p>1. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write two to four sentences (B) that includes: 1) the crux of the story idea 2) information on why the story idea is relevant to the publication’s target audience; 3) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).</p>
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
<p>2. Write about why the article is timely.</p>	<p>2. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write one to two sentences (B) that includes: 1) information about why the article is timely; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).</p>

Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
3. Write about story execution (word length, feature story versus news).	3. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write one to two sentences (B) that includes: 1) information about the style of the finished product (i.e. column, news story, feature article); 2) approximate word count; 3) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
4. Write about extras (maps, timelines, slideshows, videos).	4. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write one to two sentences (B) that includes: 1) information about any extras that could be included with the article, such as related maps, timelines, slideshows or videos; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).
Subordinate Skill	Objective
4.1 Write about whether the extras can be made by learner.	4.1 Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write one to two sentences (B) that includes: 1) information about whether the extras can be made by the learner; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
5. Write about why the learner is the ideal author.	5. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write one to two sentences (B) that includes: 1) information stating why they are the ideal author; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
6. Proofread draft of pitch letter.	6. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will proofread a draft of their

	pitch letter (B) by correcting all errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style (CR).
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
7. Address the letter to an individual editor's email, not a submissions mailbox.	7. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write the email (B) of a current editor at the target publication (CR) at the top of their pitch letter.
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Objective
8. Write an appropriate subject line that includes words that grab the reader's attention.	8. Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric (CN), learners will write an appropriate subject line (B) that includes words designed to grab the reader's attention (CR) below the email address.

Assessment Plan

Entry Skills Tests

This module because is part of a university system that includes formal entry skills assessments. These include the SATs and two pre-requisite courses that cover basic journalism writing skills and the AP style guide. Other entry skills for this module be taught and assessed in prior modules of the Science and Health Journalism course.

Two are notable, as they must be assessed before this module is conducted:

- 1) *Story Idea Assessment*
Learners will submit a document that includes:
 - a) one sentence description of their story idea;
 - b) links to source material.
- 2) *Target Publication Assessment*
Learners will submit a document that includes:
 - a) a one sentence description of the target publication;
 - b) a link to the homepage of the target publication;
 - c) a link to information about its audience;

Pretest

Given that survey results indicate the majority of students will not have any experience with pitch letters prior to taking this course (Kremen, June 25, 2018), there will be no pretest. Those few students who do have experience with pitch letters can share their knowledge during the initial class discussion. This discussion is primarily designed to encourage learners to reflect on

past experiences proposing topics for non-journalism assignments, such as essays and science fair projects, because such recall of related material is thought to enhance student learning. But those students with pitch letter experience will certainly be encouraged to share their knowledge up front, as well. This discussion will be moderated by the instructor, guiding learners toward the criteria in the job aid. It will also serve to give the instructor a solid understanding of the prior knowledge regarding pitch letters for students in that particular cohort. The discussion will receive a grade, as a part of the students' overall score for participation. A rubric will be provided for this overall participation score.

Practice Assessment

Pitch Letter Highlighting Activity

In this Pair/Share activity, learners will work with a partner to identify and label the six critical elements of two sample pitch letters by marking them with different colored ink. Students will have access to the "C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter" job aid, and the assignment rubric as they work. Once the pairs have completed the assignment for both letters, the answers will then be discussed as a class, with an opportunity for discussion and questions about the differences between the two letters. Students who submit a completed assessment with all items identified will receive one point toward the course participation score.

Posttest

Pitch Letter Writing Assessment

A written, criterion-referenced posttest with a rubric will be included in the module, and worth 10 percent of their final grade for the Science and Health Journalism course.

The assessment requires that each student writes a pitch letter. Students will be provided with the rubric, job aid, an AP Style guide, and can use the word processor they prefer on an Internet-enabled laptop. The pitch letter must include:

- 1) a subject line that contains verbs likely to catch the editor's attention and on topic;
- 2) an email address for the appropriate editor at the target publication;
- 3) the crux of the story idea;
- 4) information about why the idea is relevant to the target publication's audience;
- 5) information on any extras, such as timelines or maps, that would enhance the story and whether the author could make these elements;
- 6) information about why the author is ideal for the story;
- 7) information about why the story is timely;
- 8) details on how the story will be executed, including the style of the finished product (i.e. column, news story, feature article) and approximate word count;
- 9) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.

Design Evaluation Chart

Due to the nature of the performance objectives, which are inherently all part of the same letter, it makes sense to use assessments that covered them all at once. The criterion-referenced posttest and practice assessment are detailed in the table below. Students will work in teams on the highlighting activity and individually on the posttest during class time. The assignments will be assessed by the professor after class. Later in the semester, students will write two more pitch letters for different story ideas and target publications. Consequently, it is essential that feedback go beyond a mere score and include details on the email’s strengths and areas that could be improved.

Main Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	Parallel Test Items
Rutgers University undergraduates taking Health and Science Journalism will write a pitch letter that meets professional journalism standards. Learners will use a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric.	Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, Rutgers University undergraduates taking Health and Science Journalism will write a pitch letter that includes: 1) the crux of the story idea 2) information about its relevance to the publication’s audience, timeliness, execution, and extras; 3) why the author is ideal; 3) no errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.	<p><i>A. Pitch Letter Highlighting Activity</i></p> <p>Given the “C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid and assignment rubric, learners work in teams to highlighting the six key components of a pitch letter in two sample letters. Once all pairs have completing this task, the answers to this ungraded activity will be discussed as a class. Students who submit a completed assessment will receive one point toward their class participation score.</p>
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	<i>B. Criterion-referenced posttest with rubric</i>
1. Write about the crux of the story idea and its relevance of the audience to the audience of the target publication.	1. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write two to five sentences that includes: 1) the crux of the story idea 2) information on why the story idea is relevant to the publication’s target audience; 3) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.	Given a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, rubric, job aid, and AP Style guide, each learner will write a pitch letter based on a story idea of their choice that must include: 1) a subject line that contains verbs likely to catch the editor’s attention and on topic; 2) an email address for the appropriate editor at the target publication; 3) the crux of the story idea;
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	

<p>2. Write about why the article is timely.</p>	<p>2. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write one to three sentences that includes: 1) information about why the article is timely; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.</p>	<p>4) information about why the idea is relevant to the target publication’s audience; 5) information on any extras, such as timelines or maps, that would enhance the story and whether the author could make these elements; 6) information about why the author is ideal for the story; 7) information about why the story is timely; 8) details on how the story will be executed, including the style of the finished product (i.e. column, news story, feature article) and approximate word count; 9) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.</p>
<p>Main Step in Instructional Goal</p>	<p>Performance Objective</p>	
<p>3. Write about story execution (word length, feature story versus news).</p>	<p>3. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write one to three sentences that includes: 1) information about the style of the finished product (i.e. column, news story, feature article); 2) approximate word count; 3) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.</p>	
<p>Main Step in Instructional Goal</p>	<p>Performance Objective</p>	
<p>4. Write about extras (maps, timelines, slideshows, videos).</p>	<p>4. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write one to two sentences that includes: 1) information about any extras that could be included with the article, such as related maps, timelines, slideshows or videos; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.</p>	
<p>Subordinate Skill</p>	<p>Performance Objective</p>	

4.1 Write about whether the extras can be made by learner.	4.1 Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write one sentence that includes: 1) information about whether the extras can be made by the learner; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.	
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	
5. Write about why the learner is the ideal author.	5. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write one to three sentences that includes: 1) information stating why they are the ideal author; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.	
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	
6. Proofread draft of pitch letter.	6. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will proofread their pitch letter by correcting all errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.	
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	
7. Address the letter to an individual editor's email, not a submissions mailbox.	7. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write the email of a current editor at	

	the target publication at the top of their pitch letter.	
Main Step in Instructional Goal	Performance Objective	
8. Write an appropriate subject line that includes words that grab the reader’s attention.	8. Using a Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, job aid, sample pitch letters, AP style guide, and a rubric, learners will write an appropriate subject line that includes words designed to grab the reader’s attention below the email address.	

Instructional Strategy Alignment

Given that all aspects of this module are closely related, all of the objectives have been grouped into one cluster.

Learning Component	Design Plan
Cluster 1 Writing a Pitch Letter	<p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using their preferred Web browser, word processor, instruction sheet, rubric, AP style guide, and a job aid, learners will write two to five sentences that includes: 1) the crux of the story idea 2) information on why the story idea is relevant to the publication’s target audience; 3) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style. Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide, and a job aid, learners will write one to three sentences that includes: 1) information about why the article is timely; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style. Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide, and a job aid, learners will write one to three sentences that includes: 1) information about the style of the finished product (i.e. column, news story, feature article); 2) approximate word count; 3) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style. Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide, and a job aid, learners will write one to two sentences that includes: 1) information about any extras that could be included with the article, such as related maps, timelines, slideshows or videos; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.

- 4.1 Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide, and a job aid, learners will write one sentence that includes: 1) information about whether the extras can be made by the learner; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.
5. Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide, and a job aid, learners will write one to three sentences that includes: 1) information stating why they are the ideal author; 2) no obvious errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.
6. Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide and a job aid, learners will proofread their pitch letter by correcting all errors in spelling, grammar, or AP style.
7. Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide and a job aid (CN), learners will write the email (B) of a current editor at the target publication (CR) at the top of their pitch letter.
8. Using their preferred word processor, AP style guide and a job aid (CN), learners will write an appropriate subject line (B) that includes words designed to grab the reader's attention (CR) below the email address.

Content Presentation

1. Memes

Content:

The professor will use humor to explain the concept of pitching ideas and help students feel at ease with the new subject.

Examples:

Memes

- "I have the best story idea ever!"
- "What next?"
- "One does not simply email an editor."

Student Grouping and Media Selection:

- No groupings will be used.
- The memes will be projected on a large screen at the front of the room. The slideshow, including the memes, will also be available via Canvas for students to download.

2. Lecture: Life of an Editor and Parts of Pitch

Content:

- The professor will discuss the busy life of an editor, to explain why pitches have to grab the reader's attention immediately.
- The professor will explain the six key parts of a pitch letter: crux, relevance, extras, audience, timeliness, and execution.

Example:

- "C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter" job aid

Student Grouping and Media Selection:

- No student groupings.
- Media will include paper copies and a projection of the "C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter" job aid

Student Participation

1. *Reflection: Past Project Pitches*

Practice Activity:

The professor will lead a discussion about how students have pitched ideas for past school projects. To engage students and promote conversation, the professor will begin by sharing a personal story of an elementary school project pitch. This will help students feel confident about learning the new skill, as it is loosely related to skills they have already acquired.

Student Grouping and Media Selection:

No student grouping. The entire class will be engaged in one conversation led by the professor.
No media.

2. *Pair/Share: Highlighting Pitch Letters Assessment*

Practice Activity:

Learners will label the six essential elements of a pitch letter. Assigning a participation point to the assignment will encourage engagement, as will the social aspect of the activity.

Student Grouping and Media Selection:

- Students will work in self-selected pairs.
- Media will include the instruction sheet, job aid and two sample pitch letters.

3. *Criterion-Referenced Posttest: Pitch Letter Writing Assessment*

Practice Activity:

Learners will write a pitch letter based on a story idea of their choice that must include all the essential elements of a pitch letters with no errors in spelling, grammar, or AP Style. Students engagement is promoted via the nature of the assignment, which allows students to pick their own topics in their field of interest and a target publication of their choice.

- No student groupings.
- Media will include paper copies and a projection of the "C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter" job aid, the assignment rubric, AP Style guide and instruction sheet.

Implementation Plan

The module will be piloted on July 8th, 2018 at 4pm at Rutgers School of Communication and Information. The classroom used for the pilot is one that will likely be used for the Health and Science Journalism course. Current JMS students and alumni were recruited via the JMS alumni group on Facebook. Two people registered to participate in the pilot and agreed to complete formative evaluations. Both are JMS alumni who graduated within the last six months and self-report that they do not know how to write a pitch letter. Given that these learners are recent graduates with little to no work experience, they are nearly identical to the target learners.

Evaluation Plans

Small Group of Learners

Marking Unclear Instructions

The JMS alumsns will be asked to circle any vocabulary that is unclear and to put a check mark beside any unclear instructions.

Entry Skills Assessment

The JMS alumsns will be emailed the entry skills assessment below, which they were told they should complete at least one day prior to the pilot. Their work will be assessed to ensure the instructions are clear and that learners are capable of completing the work.

Instructions for Entry Skills Assessment

To: [Alumnus 1], [Alumnus 2]

From: [Instructor]

Subject: Writing a Pitch Letter Workshop

Thanks so much for taking part in this lesson on how to write a pitch letter. Normally, I would teach this as part of a larger course. So to make sure you're ready to write your pitch with me next Wednesday, you'll need to do a few things in advance.

Be sure to come to our Wednesday meeting with:

1. A one or two sentence description of your story idea. (Feel free to email this to me before Wednesday so I can have a look and offer advice.)
Example 1: Matte finish lipstick is on-point this year but it also has another advantage: it stays on longer! We test the top brands for staying power and offer tips on how to really lengthen the life of your lipstick with primers and sealants.
Example 2: Teen pregnancy rates might be stable in the US, but we explore a related, troubling trend: the rising rate of infanticide by teens.
2. The URL for your target publication (the site where you ideally want to publish the story idea).

Example 1: <https://www.glamour.com>

Example 2: <https://www.theatlantic.com>

3. The specific URL with information about the target publication's audience. This is normally found in the section of the site where they keep information for prospective advertisers. Scroll down to the very bottom of the site and look for something called Advertiser Info, Write for Us, Media Kit or About. You might need to poke around the site map to find the right page.

Example 1: I started here <https://www.glamour.co>, then scrolled down and got to here <http://www.condenast.com/brands/glamour/> and I scrolled to the bottom again and ultimately to what I wanted which was under Media Kit and is located here <http://s16896.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/CN-Media-Kit-June-2018.pdf>. That last URL has the kind of info you'll need for your target publication.

Example 2: I started here <https://www.theatlantic.com/>, then scrolled to the bottom, clicked on Advertise and got to here <https://advertising.theatlantic.com/>. Then clicked on Media Kit and got what I was looking for here: https://advertising.theatlantic.com/content/theatlantic_mediakit_032618.pdf.

You only need to come with ONE idea and set of URLs. I'm providing two examples, just to give you a good sense of the range of possibilities. I'm happy to work with you on any idea, for any publication.

Send me an email if you're having trouble pulling any of this together or give me a call at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

[Instructor's Name]

Grading of Pitch Letter Writing Assignment

The JMS alumni in the pilot will write pitch letters as a part of the pilot. Those letters will be graded to see whether the material was helpful in teaching the skill.

Survey

The JMS alumni will also complete a follow-up survey online, via SurveyMonkey, at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JH2HFML>. A copy of the survey can also be found below.

Training Evaluation: Create a Pitch Letter

This evaluation is designed to identify ways to improve the training session and aspects that succeeded. Honesty is much appreciated!

1. I feel more confident in my ability to write a pitch letter because of Prof. Kremen's training session.

___ Strongly agree

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. I will definitely refer to the C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter job aid again.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3. The memes piqued my interest in the subject.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. The instruction clearly tied the material to the real world.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. I had ample time to complete each aspect of the training session.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you felt rushed at any time during the training session, when was that?

6. Was there any aspect of the module that should be omitted or altered?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please elaborate.

7. My favorite part of the training session was...

Subject Matter Expert

Interview

A subject matter expert will be sent the Facilitator's Guide, job aid, and all other instructional materials. The next day, an in-person interview will be conducted gauging his thoughts on the materials. He will be asked the following:

1. Do you think the materials will prepare our learners for professional pitch letter writing?
2. Do you think the skills are properly grouped and ordered, in terms of instruction?
3. Have I covered all the skills adequately?
4. Specifically, do you think I have omitted anything from the job aid?

Learning Module

Objective

Rutgers University undergraduates in the Journalism and Media Studies program will write a pitch letter about a science journalism article that meets professional journalism standards, as a part of their course work for the class Health and Science Journalism. Learners will use a Web browser, AP Style guide, job aid and word processor of their choice, just as they would as working journalists.

Overview

This 80-minute, in-person lesson teaches adult learners how to write a letter that pitches a story idea to a news or magazine editor. The module involves:

1. An opening reflection
2. A short lecture;
3. A Pair/Share activity in which learners highlight the parts of a pitch letter;
4. A posttest in which learners write their own pitch letter.

Preparation

Prior to beginning this lesson, the instructor should have:

1. Taught learners how to find a story idea and provided feedback on a one sentence synopsis of the idea;
2. Taught learners how to identify a target publication, provided feedback on the learner's choice and followed up with any learners who were unable to locate advertising information for the target publication.
3. Purchased one set of six different colored highlighters per pair of learners;
4. Printed one copy of the "Pitch Letter Highlighting Activity" per learner;
5. Printed one copy of "Sample Pitch Letter 1" and "Sample Pitch Letter 2" per learner;
6. Printed one copy of the "How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter" job aid per learner;
7. Printed one copy of the "Pitch Assignment" assessment per learner;
8. Uploaded the "How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter" job aid and the "Pitch Assignment" details to the Canvas course site.
9. Ensured the "Pitch Assignment" assessment is worth ten percent of the final course grade in the Canvas grade book.

Agenda

1. Reflection: Past Project Pitches (5 minutes)
 - Lead a discussion of how students have pitched ideas for past school work.

2. Lecture with accompanying slideshow, “Writing a Pitch Letter” (10 minutes)
 - Lead a discussion of how students have pitched ideas for past school work
 - Show memes
 - Discuss the busy life of an editor and the minimal time allotted for pitch review.
 - Handout “How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid and discuss the parts of a pitch

3. Pair/Share: Pitch Letter Highlighting Activity (20 minutes total)
 - Instruct students to work in pairs, labelling the parts of two sample pitch letters using highlighters
 - Take questions, discuss results

4. Posttest: Pitch Assignment (40 minutes)
 - Instruct students to work individually, writing a pitch letter for their story idea
 - Remind them to use the “How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid and AP Style Guide
 - Assist students in the writing process as necessary

Facilitator's Guide

Reflection: Past Project Pitches

(5 minutes)

The professor should start the module by leading a discussion of how students have pitched ideas for past assignments, such as essays and writing assignments where the student was submitting a topic for approval.

The professor can share a story about an assignment topic she remembers pitching as a young student. The story should briefly mention the format (verbal/written/image) and a few details of notable things she included or forgot to include in the pitch. It's best to present an imperfect scenario, so that students feel free to share their own stories, be they of failure or success.

Write key points raised by students that relate to the C.R.E.A.T.E. system on the blackboard. If a student raises a similar point again, it's helpful to put a check mark beside the original point on the board so that all students feel their contributions are valued. At the end of the discussion, highlight these findings and note how much the students already know about the process. Then make it clear that you'll be adding some other important elements and fine tuning their ideas so they suit journalism. This will help students feel confident about learning the new skill of writing a pitch letter, as it is loosely related to skills they have already acquired – pitching project topics.

Lectures with Accompanying Slideshow: Writing a Pitch Letter

(10 minutes total)

Lecture: Life of an Editor (5 minutes)

Three funny memes open this slideshow. The memes follow the thought process of a junior reporter who has a great story idea only to realize they have no idea how to pitch it – beyond knowing that editors don't take pitches by phone. The professor will use these memes as a jumping off point, to explain the various roles of an editor, with an emphasis on how busy they are. They will finish up by explaining that the reason this lesson is critical is because editors only have a moment to glance at a pitch – so it has to be stellar and include all the essential details. Finally, the professor will convey why this skill is critical to the course (the students will write three pitch letters, in total) and in the life of a freelance or staff journalist.

Lecture: Parts of a Pitch: (5 minutes)

1. Describe the six parts of a pitch letter: Crux, Relevance, Extras, Author, Timeliness, Execution. Project the job aid for students so they can make the connection between that document and the lecture;
2. Explain that pitch letters must be sent by email – never social media or snail mail;
3. Explain that pitch letters must be addressed to a specific editor, not a general mailbox;
4. Explain that the entire pitch should be less than 14 sentences;

5. Convey the importance of proper, spelling, grammar and AP style.

Pair/Share: Pitch Letter Highlighting Activity

(20 minutes total)

Organize (5 minutes)

Have the learners select a partner, then have one learner per pair get the supplies for the activity from the front of the room. Each pair should receive:

1. The “Highlighting Sample Pitch Letters” instruction sheet;
2. A copy of the “How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid;
3. two sample pitch letters;
4. six different colored highlighters.

Ask the learners to silently read the entire assignment sheet before beginning.

Ask learners if they have any questions.

Pair (10 minutes)

Instruct learners that they should begin reading and then discussing the pitch letters. Remind the learners that they must work as a team on both letters – not divide them up.

Share (5 minutes)

1. Randomly select three aspects of each letter and ask students to read the key phrase or sentence that addresses this aspect.
2. Note the subject lines. Ask learners if any words caught their attention.
3. Note the email addresses, and how they indicate individuals – not a general mailbox.
4. Ask learners if they had difficulty designating any of the sentences.
5. Ask learners if they spotted anything missing from either pitch letter.
6. Provide examples of why a writer might exclude an element.
7. Explain how learners should indicate their own thoughtful reasoning as a comment in their final pitch letter, so that they do not lose points for such an omission. Explain that they would get full credit given a reasonable explanation.

Posttest: Pitch Assignment (40 minutes)

Ask students to read the “Pitch Letter Writing Assessment” instructions to themselves. Recap the key points, being sure to go over the rubric in detail. Then ask the learners if they have any questions. Finally, explain that learners will have the rest of the class to write their letters and that students should raise their hand if they have a problem and you will come around as needed.

When there is 15 minutes left, remind students that they need to proofread their letters.

Five minutes before the end of the class, remind students that they need to submit their assignments via Canvas before leaving.

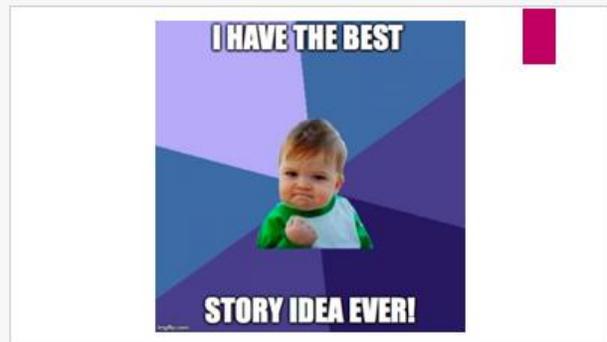
Class Materials

Slideshow: Writing a Pitch Letter

The PowerPoint presentation can also be downloaded from <https://tinyurl.com/y75f37hl>.



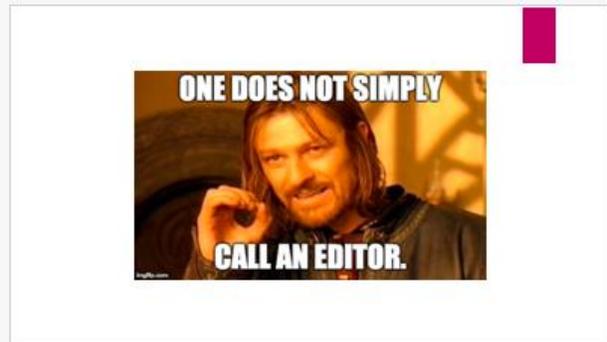
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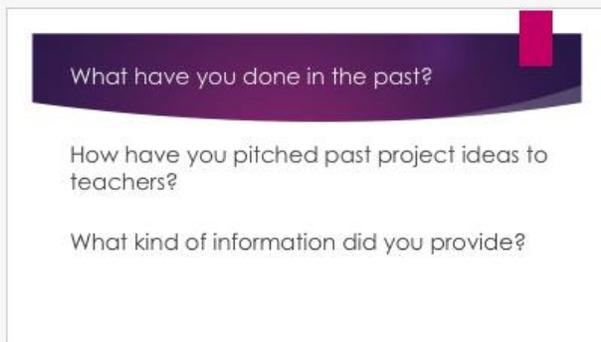
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4



5



6

Highlighting Sample Pitch Letters

Names: _____

Submit to Professor at end of class Grade: _____ / 1 participation point

Description:

For this assignment you will work in pairs, using highlighters to mark the Crux, Relevance, Extras, Author, Timeliness and Execution information in two sample pitch letters.

Supplies (provided by professor):

- two sample pitch letters;
- six different colored highlighters;

Instructions:

1. Pair up with the classmate of your choice. Complete each step as a team.
2. Ask your professor for the activity supplies.
3. Write your names at the top of this piece of paper and at the top of each article.
4. Make a legend for your pitch letters below. Fill in the right column with the corresponding highlighter color, by swiping it across that cell in the table.
5. Review the job aid, "How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter."
6. Write both of your names at the top of Sample Pitch Letter #1.
7. Read the letter completely.
8. Now go back through the letter one sentence at a time and decide what aspect of the C.R.E.A.T.E. process that sentence addresses. Highlight it accordingly.
9. If there is an aspect missing, write that down at the bottom of the pitch letter.
10. Repeat steps 5 – 8 for Sample Pitch Letter #2.
11. Hand in all sheets to your instructor.

Pitch Letter Legend

Aspect of the C.R.E.A.T.E. Process	Color of Highlighter
Crux	
Relevance	
Extras	
Author	
Timeliness	
Execution	

Sample Pitch Letter 1

Names: _____

To: cameron@psychologytoday.com

Subject: Without a voice, these kids find their words -- story pitch

Hanna was trapped in her mind since childhood, unable to convey her intelligence. Presented with the same kindergarten work each day, she longed to study algebra and science. She couldn't control her body much at all. But she was in there. At age 11, Hanna finally found a way to communicate and revealed the thoughts she'd held inside for years.

I'd like to write a feature story for *Psychology Today* magazine about a kind of therapy that has revealed the hidden intellect of Hanna and many children like her. Developed by the mother of a severely autistic boy, the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) uses a low-distraction environment, rapid prompts, and the sound of ripping paper to help students summon the focus to use a laminated letterboard, stencil or keyboard to spell.

My article would explore the idea behind RPM: that many people with severe autism are far more intelligent than they appear, but have no way to communicate their thoughts due to a significant lack of motor control and challenges focusing. The article would outline RPM, and also let readers meet several RPM students. It would give a voice to the nonverbal, and allow them to tell their stories. (I would interview the RPM students in person, confirming they alone are communicating.) I think your readers would be interested to hear about this emerging communication method as it is tied to the idea that some folks have far more going on inside than they are able to communicate.

I know many children and teens willing to be interviewed for such a story, and I have extensive knowledge of traditional autism therapies that I can draw upon for the piece. With more than 15 years of journalism experience, I've written for *The New York Times*, *New Scientist* and *Scientific American*. I can also take photos of Hanna and her mother engaging in RPM.

Please feel free to write or call with any questions. You'll find samples of my work at <http://johnsmith017.com>. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

John Smith
johnsmith017@gmail.com
732-333-3233

Sample Pitch Letter 2

Names: _____

To: tonesha@smartgirls.com

Subject: Pitch: FemmeHacks Connects Female Coders

Hello, my name is Jane Smith and I have nearly seven years of experience as a science writer and editor. I have a story idea that I thought might work well in Smart Girl's Inspiration section, about a confident teen who organized her own conference for female software engineers. This seems like precisely the sort of stories your readers have enjoyed in the past.

When Drexel University freshman Andrea Baric noticed there weren't any good networking opportunities for female undergraduate coders, she created her own. FemmeHacks (<http://femmehacks.weebly.com>) will give female coders a chance to learn about the industry, make new friends, and write lots of code in small groups. More than 100 people are expected to attend the free event at Philadelphia's ExCITe Center this weekend. Industry panelists will award prizes to the teams with the best projects on Saturday night.

I plan to attend the event this Friday, which makes for a great news peg. I thought the story might work well as a Q&A with Baric with a paragraph on top introducing the group. I can take some headshots of Baric while I'm there, along with a few photos of the crowd.

For more information about my background and samples of my work, please visit <https://www.linkedin.com/in/JaneSmith>.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Jane Smith
732-432-3232

Pitch Letter Writing Assessment

Name: _____

Submit to Canvas by end of class

Grade: _____ / 10 percent of final grade

Description:

Work independently, writing a pitch letter based on your approved story idea and target publication.

Supplies:

1. A word processor and web browser (for background research and [Merriam-Webster](#));
2. Your AP Style Guide;
3. “How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid, supplied by the professor.

Instructions:

1. Review the “How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid.
2. Write a pitch letter that includes:
 - a. two to four sentences about the **crux** of the story idea
 - b. one to two sentences about its **relevance** to the publication’s target audience;
 - c. one to two sentences about the **execution** of the story, including the style of the article (i.e. column, news story, feature article) and approximate word count;
 - d. one to two sentences about why you are the ideal **author**;
 - e. one to two sentences about why the article is **timely**;
 - f. one to two sentences about any **extras** that could be included with the article, and whether you can make them yourself;
 - g. an **email address** for the appropriate editor at the target publication;
 - h. an appropriate **subject line** with words designed to grab the reader’s attention;
 - i. **no obvious errors** in spelling, grammar, or AP style.
3. Proofread your letter.

Rubric

Aspect of Assignment	Your Score	Highest Possible Score
Crux		1
Relevance		1
Extras		1
Author		1
Timeliness		1
Execution		1
Appropriate Email Address and Subject Line		1
Errors in Spelling, Grammar, and AP Style		3
Total		10 percent of final grade



Crux

Summarize the essential aspects of the story idea in a way that grips the reader.



Relevance

Explain why the story will matter to the audience.



Extras

Describe additional elements that could enhance the story, such as maps, timelines, or slideshows.



Author

Explain why you are the ideal author.



Timeliness

Write about why the article is timely.



Execution

Describe the style of the final product (i.e. news, feature, or editorial) and estimate the word count.

Prof. Rachel Kremen, Journalism and Media Studies Department, Rutgers University

*Implementation &
Formative
Evaluation Report*

Description of Pilot

Two JMS alumni were sent the entry skills assessment in early August via email. They attended the pilot of the workshop on August 8, 2018 in a Rutgers classroom frequently used for JMS courses.

Both learners participated in all activities and reported enjoying all aspects of the workshop. The learners laughed at the memes though they struggled to come up with specifics for past project pitches. The learners paired up to complete the highlighting activity and a lively discussion followed about the differences between the two sample pitches. Then they worked individually on their pitch letter assessments. Guidance was provided to the learners as requested, largely helping them craft sentences or find the ideal word.

At the end of the session both learners expressed gratitude for the experience, had no suggested changes and reported no confusion over instructions. Both said they appreciated the opportunity to write the letters with an instructor present because it provided an opportunity to ask questions.

Small Group of Learners

Marking Unclear Instructions

Summary

Neither student noted any issues with the instructions for either activity. No marks were made on sheets and students verbally confirmed they did not find anything confusing. I specifically asked the students if they knew what the word *crux* meant, as that was the one term that concerned me. They were able to provide a good definition, agreeing that they'd thought it was the same as "gist."

Raw data

Not applicable.

Entry Skills Assessment

Summary

The JMS alumni were given an entry skills assessment that they brought with them to the workshop. One alumnus satisfactorily completed all three elements. The other found a few possible target publications but could not narrow it down to one. He had not found audience information for any of these possible targets.

Raw data

Element	One-sentence story description	Target publication URL	Audience information URL
---------	--------------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------

Complete	2	2	1
Incomplete	0	0	1

Alumnus 1

1. Researchers have developed a test and treatment for the deadly bacterium *Klebsiella pneumoniae*.
2. Target Publication URL: <https://www.newscientist.com>
3. Audience Information: <https://www.newscientist.com/freelancers/>

Alumnus 2

1. I am an inspirational athlete because I have CP but still do lots of sports and especially love CrossFit.
2. Target Publication URL: <http://crossfit.com>, <https://www.boxrox.com>, <https://www.theboxmag.com>
3. Audience Information: None

Grading of Pitch Letter Writing Assignment

Summary

Both JMS alumni wrote a pitch letter during the workshop. Alumnus 1 met all criteria. Alumnus 2 failed to find an email address for an editor at the target publication and also had multiple errors AP style errors. This shows that he is weak in skills taught in freshman courses. He did, however, include all the essential elements of a pitch letter.

Aspect of Assignment	Alumnus 1	Alumnus 2	Highest Possible Score
Crux	1	1	1
Relevance	1	1	1
Extras	1	1	1
Author	1	1	1
Timeliness	1	1	1
Execution	1	1	1
Appropriate Email Address and Subject Line	1	0.5	1
Errors in Spelling, Grammar, and AP Style	3	1.5	3
Total	10	8	10 percent of final grade

Raw data

Pitch Letter Assignment Writing Assignment By Alumnus 1

Subject: Curing Colic With Probiotics

Email: penny.sarchet@newscientist.com

Klebsiella pneumoniae is a killer. This bacterium is usually innocuous in the gut, but can wreak havoc when it spreads to other areas, causing tissue infections. Last month researchers

perfected a test that will identify the hypervirulent strain in tissue. This significant advance will allow doctors to treat the disease faster and with targeted meds.

A 500-word story about the blood test would be ideal for New Scientist's front of book section. I could work with one of the artists at New Scientist to develop a diagram explaining how the disease moves out of the gut to other systems. I've written about this bacterium before, so I have a good sense of the key players to interview and past work in the field. I also know these types of stories tend to go viral on NewScientist.com, as the bacterium is a hot topic for researchers in the field.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

[Alumnus 1]

Pitch Letter Assignment Writing Assignment By Alumnus 2

Subject: Inspirational Athlete with Cerebral Palsy

Email: (TBD)

In baseball there are outs. In basketball there are quarters. But in CrossFit the only thing holding me back is me.

As an athlete with Cerebral palsy, I have tried many sports, but CrossFit is the only sport that allows me to get better each time I'm in the Gym. I think my story would inspire your readers. Although my legs aren't fully functional; I can rope climb, front squat, and have completed the Murphy workout twice.

I'd love to write an 750-word story for Boxrox's feature section. I can also include videos of me performing CrossFit moves.

As a recent graduate of Rutgers University Journalism studies, I have written numerous articles for the school newspaper and am well versed in the writing and editing process.

Sincerely,

[Alumnus 2]

Survey

Summary

The survey results show the training was successful from the student's perspective. Notably, they reported feeling more confident in their ability to write a pitch letter, that they would use the job aid again and that they had enough time to complete all of the activities. They did not

suggest any changes to the workshop. Finally, both students wrote that they appreciated devoting time at the workshop to actually write the letters. This was a significant finding because it supported the decision not to schedule the writing as homework.

Raw data

A copy of the survey results from the two alumni who participated in the workshop are found below. Graphs of the results can be found online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-V2XQSRMTL/>.

Training Evaluation: Create a Pitch Letter

This evaluation is designed to identify ways to improve the training session and aspects that succeeded. Honesty is much appreciated!

1. I feel more confident in my ability to write a pitch letter because of Prof. Kremen's training session.

2__ Strongly agree

___ Agree

___ Somewhat agree

___ Neither agree nor disagree

___ Somewhat disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly Disagree

2. I will definitely refer to the C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter job aid again.

1__ Strongly agree

1__ Agree

___ Neither agree nor disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

3. The memes piqued my interest in the subject.

1__ Strongly agree

1__ Agree

___ Neither agree nor disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

4. The instruction clearly tied the material to the real world.

2__ Strongly agree

___ Agree

___ Neither agree nor disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

5. I had ample time to complete each aspect of the training session.

2__ Strongly agree

___ Agree

___ Neither agree nor disagree

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

If you felt rushed at any time during the training session, when was that?

No comments submitted.

6. Was there any aspect of the module that should be omitted or altered?

___ Yes

2__ No

If yes, please elaborate.

No comments submitted.

7. My favorite part of the training session was...

Alumnus 1:

I really liked the fact that we wrote our first drafts during class time, with the teacher there.

That way I could get help in the moment. When we do this sort of thing as homework, I tend to get stuck.

Alumnus 2:

Being able to apply what I learned right away!!

Subject Matter Expert

Interview

Summary

A subject matter expert was sent the Facilitator's Guide, job aid, and all other instructional materials. The next day, an in-person interview was conducted. The key finding was that the SME felt it was essential to indicate that pitch letters need to be short.

Raw Data

Q1: Do you think the materials will prepare our learners for professional pitch letter writing?

A1: Yes. I think it covers off all the important aspects. Make sure you emphasize that these things have to be short, too. Very short.

Q2: Do you think the skills are properly grouped and ordered, in terms of instruction?

A2: Yes.

Q3: Have I covered all the skills adequately?

A3: Yes. I think if you have them write several pitches in the course that will cover it off well.

Q4: Specifically, do you think I have omitted anything from the job aid?

A4: No. Just be sure to remind them in class that it needs to be short and sweet.

Synthesis

Recommendation 1: Encourage Brevity

The SME felt strongly that the workshop should emphasize brevity. Consequently, the following changes should be made to the workshop:

- a. The Pitch Letter Writing Assessment instructions should be updated as shown below, so that it includes:
 - i. an additional instruction, listed prior to the proofreading instruction, that reads: “3. Ensure the body of the email is less than 14 sentences”;
 - ii. an additional item in the rubric listed as: “Length (Less than 14 sentences).” This item will be worth one point. That point will be removed from the Spelling, grammar and AP Style category.
- b. Sample Pitch Letter 1 should also be updated as shown below, so that the body of the letter is less than 14 sentences.

Recommendation 2: Grade Entry Skills Assessment to Promote Focus

Alumnus 2 had trouble narrowing down a single target publication in advance of the workshop. He was able to do this with instructor assistance during the workshop. However, he was unable to find the email address of a target editor. This wasn’t due to lack of time. (Even Alumnus 2 reported ample time for all exercises.) This was because the student didn’t arrive to the workshop with a focused goal. He had trouble committing to a single publication to target during the workshop and insisted he’d find the editor’s email later, once he was “100 percent sure about the target publication.” To ensure future students are focused on a target publication when they arrive to the workshop, the following changes should be made, as per the updated version below:

- a. The entry skills assessment must have a firm deadline and must be submitted to the instructor, be graded and returned to the student prior to the workshop to ensure all entry requirements are fully met.

Recommendation 3: Promote the AP Style Guide

Alumnus 2 failed to follow AP Style. He failed to bring his AP Style Guide to the workshop and, though he was given the instructor's copy, he failed to open it. To ensure future students bring and use the AP Stylebook, the following changes should be made:

- c. The instructor should remind students in the middle of the writing activity to check their AP Stylebook whenever they are unsure about a word or phrase.
- d. Students should be advised to bring their AP Stylebook to class verbally in the prior class and in the instructions for the entry level assessment, as shown in the updated version below.

Recommendation 4: Reconsider Discussion of Past Pitches

Both alumni struggled to think of specific examples of past project pitches and the elements within them. While the learners did not suggest this be omitted from future workshops, this was certainly the weakest part of the module and could likely be dropped from the slideshow without impacting the rest of the workshop or course. Testing it with a larger group is recommended, however, before the element is dropped.

Pitch Letter Writing Assessment – Updated Version

Name: _____

Submit to Canvas by end of class Grade: _____ / 10 percent of final grade

Description:

Work independently, writing a pitch letter based on your approved story idea and target publication.

Supplies:

1. A word processor and web browser (for background research and [Merriam-Webster](#));
2. Your AP Style Guide;
3. “How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid, supplied by the professor.

Instructions:

1. Review the “How to C.R.E.A.T.E. a Pitch Letter” job aid.
2. Write a pitch letter that includes:
 - a. two to four sentences about the **crux** of the story idea
 - b. one to two sentences about its **relevance** to the publication’s target audience;
 - c. one to two sentences about the **execution** of the story, including the style of the article (i.e. column, news story, feature article) and approximate word count;
 - d. one to two sentences about why you are the ideal **author**;
 - e. one to two sentences about why the article is **timely**;
 - f. one to two sentences about any **extras** that could be included with the article, and whether you can make them yourself;
 - g. an **email address** for the appropriate editor at the target publication;
 - h. an appropriate **subject line** with words designed to grab the reader’s attention;
 - i. **no obvious errors** in spelling, grammar, or AP style.
3. Ensure the body of the email is less than 14 sentences.
4. Proofread your letter.

Rubric

Aspect of Assignment	Your Score	Highest Possible Score
Crux		1
Relevance		1
Extras		1
Author		1
Timeliness		1
Execution		1
Appropriate Email Address and Subject Line		1
Length (Less than 14 sentences)		1
Errors in Spelling, Grammar, and AP Style		2
Total		10 percent of final grade

Sample Pitch Letter 1 - Updated Version

Names: _____

To: cameron@psychologytoday.com

Subject: Without a voice, these kids find their words -- story pitch

Hanna was trapped in her mind since childhood, unable to convey her intelligence. Presented with the same kindergarten work each day, she longed to study algebra and science. She couldn't control her body much at all. But she was in there. At age 11, Hanna finally found a way to communicate and revealed the thoughts she'd held inside for years.

I'd like to write a feature story for *Psychology Today* magazine about the Rapid Prompting Method: a kind of therapy that has revealed the hidden intellect of Hanna and many children like her. I think your readers would be interested to hear about this emerging communication method as it is tied to the idea that some folks have far more going on inside than they are able to communicate.

I know many children and teens willing to be interviewed for such a story, and I have extensive knowledge of traditional autism therapies that I can draw upon for the piece. With more than 15 years of journalism experience, I've written for *The New York Times*, *New Scientist* and *Scientific American*. I can also take photos of Hanna and her mother engaging in RPM.

Please feel free to write or call with any questions. You'll find samples of my work at <http://johnsmith017.com>. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

John Smith

johnsmith017@gmail.com

732-333-3233

Instructions for Entry Skills Assessment – Updated Version

To: [Alumnus 1], [Alumnus 2]

From: [Instructor]

Subject: Writing a Pitch Letter Workshop

Thanks so much for taking part in this lesson on how to write a pitch letter. Normally, I would teach this as part of a larger course. So to make sure you're ready to write your pitch with me next Wednesday, you'll need to do a few things in advance.

Be sure to come to our Wednesday meeting with:

1. A one or two sentence description of your story idea. (Feel free to email this to me before Wednesday so I can have a look and offer advice.)

Example 1: Matte finish lipstick is on-point this year but it also has another advantage: it stays on longer! We test the top brands for staying power and offer tips on how to really lengthen the life of your lipstick with primers and sealants.

Example 2: Teen pregnancy rates might be stable in the US, but we explore a related, troubling trend: the rising rate of infanticide by teens.

2. The URL for your target publication (the site where you ideally want to publish the story idea).

Example 1: <https://www.glamour.com>

Example 2: <https://www.theatlantic.com>

3. The specific URL with information about the target publication's audience. This is normally found in the section of the site where they keep information for prospective advertisers. Scroll down to the very bottom of the site and look for something called Advertiser Info, Write for Us, Media Kit or About. You might need to poke around the site map to find the right page.

Example 1: I started here <https://www.glamour.co>, then scrolled down and got to here <http://www.condenast.com/brands/glamour/> and I scrolled to the bottom again and ultimately to what I wanted which was under Media Kit and is located here <http://s16896.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/CN-Media-Kit-June-2018.pdf>. That last URL has the kind of info you'll need for your target publication.

Example 2: I started here <https://www.theatlantic.com/>, then scrolled to the bottom, clicked on Advertise and got to here <https://advertising.theatlantic.com/>. Then clicked on Media Kit and got what I was looking for here: https://advertising.theatlantic.com/content/theatlantic_mediakit_032618.pdf.

4. Your AP Style guide, a laptop and pen.

Only come with ONE idea and set of URLs. I'm providing two examples, just to give you a good sense of the range of possibilities. I'm happy to work with you on any idea, for any publication.

Send me an email if you're having trouble pulling any of this together or give me a call at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

[Instructor's Name]

References

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Stoerger, S. (2018). Executive Summary of the JMS Program Goals Survey. Rutgers University.