

SHORT DOCUMENTARY FILM PITCH

— 5 Things to Include in Your **Short Pitch** —

One quick note on what NOT to include in your pitch:

NEVER TELL THE WHOLE STORY

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The **pitch** is a boiled-down description of what your script is about.

Pitching is an art, not a science. It is also an exercise in being able to find your story's essential elements. In pitching you Do NOT tell the whole story.

Before crafting the pitch, think carefully about it, map it out precisely, and practice it. The pitch should be vivid, concise, memorable and distinct. It should describe the key characters and the general story line. It should also describe the key turning point.

When you are able to get in front of a producer who might want to buy your script, you need to **sell it verbally** before possibly selling it actually. When pitching, you want to be engaging, present your story succinctly and dramatically, answer any questions from your audience.

TIPS FOR PITCHING: Do not read anything. Look at the class. Engage with the class. Know your story and your pitch inside out. Refer to this sheet when needed but otherwise tell the audience the story basics and get them excited to learn more through your own excitement and engagement with your material.

CRAFTING THE PITCH

1. START WITH A QUESTION OR A RELATABLE PROBLEM

Draw the audience you're pitching to in by piquing their interest.

Example: Imagine representing half of a population but only having a 12% say in its rules. That's a warped picture. And yet that's the problem Sierra Leonean women face every day – and a problem that three women in particular who fought hard to end a civil war are now fighting politically to fix.

2. HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE IDEA

In just a few sentences, explain what hooked you in. Make the story specifics universal.

***Example:** Focusing on stories and work that “matter,” I was drawn to this story because societal inequality is such a lasting legacy of patriarchal systems and a picture familiar to societies around the world. In Sierra Leone, women worked so hard to establish peace in the country and yet they have been sidelined by the political system in the 11 years since the civil war ended, and this film aims to spotlight and commend their struggle.*

3. FOCUS ON THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE STORY

Who is the main character(s)? What is their desire? What is their struggle? How will the audience empathize with their journey?

4. LEAVE THE AUDIENCE WANTING MORE

Don't reveal the ending or outcome of the script in the pitch. Complete your presentation by either summarizing the conflict or revealing whatever major setback occurs before the story's resolution.

5. FINISH THE DOCUMENTARY PITCH WITH THE **TITLE** AND THE **LOGLINE**

For the **title**, be sure the name of your doc project gives the audience an idea of what to suspect, is clever, and interesting. Try to use a play on words, a clever turn of phrase...

After the audience knows the essence of your story, you introduce the title followed by a single sentence that summarizes it all: “*So basically, my documentary project [**INSERT TITLE HERE**] is about a _____ who must _____, **BUT** runs into problems with _____.*”

Do **not** use the above sentence structure verbatim; use it to get an idea of all the elements you need to point to in the logline. The pitch is not a Mad-Lib. Just be sure the logline includes everything that must be included in a logline – a main character who wants something but has trouble getting it. Note that we don’t know from the log line whether the protagonist succeeds or not. Your task with the pitch is to draw in the audience. If they *asks* how the movie ends, go ahead and say. Otherwise, keep them guessing and wanting more.
