



# The 10-Point Pitching Plan

What commissioning editors really want...  
and where you're going wrong

**BY PUNTEHA VAN TERHEYDEN**

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# Introduction

It's one of the questions freelance journalists ask me most often: "Why are my pitches being ignored or rejected?"

In this detailed guide, I reveal exactly where freelancers go wrong and what commissioning editors really want to read in your pitch.

## **Success rates**

My conversion rate from pitch to commission is 96 per cent, so my methods work consistently. Now, I'm revealing my winning pitching method so you can craft ideas that secure commissions, cash and bylines.

My 10-Point Pitching Plan is packed with real life examples of successful pitches to magazines, newspapers, digital news websites and online platforms, detailed explanations about why they worked, and exactly how you can repeat the same successful formula.

If you're already smashing it and have commissions coming out of your ears from the stories you pitch, you probably don't need this guide.

**But this book is worth your time if you:**

- Want to know why your pitches are ignored/rejected.
- Are losing hope of ever 'making it'.
- Want to make more money freelancing.
- Want to deepen your understanding of pitching to print or digital titles.
- Are making the leap to freelancing or graduating soon.

Let's begin!

## **Demystifying the process**

The most important thing you need to know is that the fix for your pitches being rejected or ignored is surprisingly straightforward. Believe it or not, there is a clear formula for pitching success. The commissioning process is not arbitrary, purely subjective, mysterious, or impossible to crack.

And whilst there will be nuances and personal preferences from one commissioning editor to the next, their jobs are essentially the same: commission stories that work best for their target readership, editorial agenda, needs, budget and deadline.

So, be honest with yourself. Are you catering your pitches exactly to commissioning editors' needs? Or are you more interested in the thing you want to write about?

It's a vital distinction as commissioning editors decide quickly if your idea is a) right for them, b)

interesting enough, c) worthy of publishing and d) worth spending the commissioning budget on.

## **Volume**

Commissioning editors on national titles receive dozens, if not hundreds of ideas just like yours daily. During my years commissioning at Take a Break, the biggest selling women's weekly real-life magazine in the UK, I often received over 200 ideas daily. I'd have minutes – if that – to decide if it was for us.

Chuck in all the emails I'd receive from freelancers in rolling dialogue about their idea(s), previous/live stories, queries from in-house editorial and advertising teams, and I'd easily read and answer hundreds of emails daily.

Commissioning editors are slammed all day, every day. That's why their editorial skills evolve into an instinctive, rapid process of elimination. Their ability to quick-fire assess which pitches are exactly right for them result in a natural formula – an algorithm

of sorts – which I will share with you in detail in this book.

## **Formula**

That formula becomes so innate to those holding the commissioning purse strings, that they will know within seconds of reading your email if your idea is a yes or no for them. Sometimes, they'll have a good idea of their interest in buying from the subject line of your pitch alone.

Understanding this formula to commissioning is your key to unlocking an endless stream of successful pitches and I'm going to help you do it.



# Why listen to me?

So, what makes me the person to listen to when it comes to successful pitching?

## Here are a few key reasons:

- I have more than 13 years' experience writing, commissioning, and editing news and features for the UK's biggest-selling national newspapers and magazines.
- I'm a Sunday Times bestselling non-fiction ghostwriter with Penguin.
- I'm the founding editor of ground-breaking ethical true-life platform [Lacuna Voices](#).
- 96% of my pitches sell.

Don't just take my word for it. Here's what editors on national titles, journalism lecturers, journalism students and freelancers have to say...

“Punteha has an unrivalled wealth of knowledge about all things journalism, which she generously shares. While Punteha is one of our regular

freelancers, pitching spot-on features across the different publications we produce true-life content for, she also covered maternity leave for one of my editors. During that time, she not only mentored our writers, but ran a pitch-perfect session for the team about sourcing and writing stories, the notes for which have been bible for us ever since. So, I know her eBooks will be invaluable to journalism students and freelancers alike.”

**Tanya Russell, Real Life Content Director – Chat, Woman, Woman's Own, Woman's Weekly**

“Punteha is a dream to work with. Her story-getting is exceptional: she knows where to look and how to secure fantastic, targeted interviews. Her pitching is thorough, comprising a precis and photos, which makes it so easy for an editor to make a judgment about whether to proceed with a commission. And her writing is so adaptable, whether it's a warm, human-interest story for a weekly magazine or more fact-driven article for monthly. She can turn her hand to anything. Her natural curiosity,

experience, skill and professionalism make her a complete all-rounder.”

**Keith Kendrick, Group Magazines Editor – BBC Good Food**

“Punteha is brimming with original ideas, a complete professional and always a delight to work with. I would not hesitate to recommend her.”

**Emma Pryer, Senior Feature Writer/Former Head of Features – Sunday Mirror/Sunday People**

“I have worked with Punteha for more than ten years and I hope I'll be working with her for another ten. She's an editor's dream, pitching timely, on-brand, exclusive ideas, writing to a brief, adopting the magazine's tone of voice, and delivering a fully-formed feature with all the assets required. She makes my job a breeze!”

**Rebecca Fleming, Editor - Take a Break**

“Punteha’s vast experience in the world of journalism not only ensures she knows exactly what editors are looking for but creates succinct and

perfectly-written pitches to grab their attention. Her enviable skillset is why Punteha is one of the most highly thought of journalists in the UK, with a portfolio of work to illustrate her vast collection of published articles.”

**Michelle Rawlins, University Teacher (Journalism) – University of Sheffield**

“Describing someone as a safe pair of hands sounds a bit boring, doesn’t it? But as an editor with far less time, budget, and resources than I’d like, a safe pair of hands is a gift - and Punteha is among the safest around. Her pitches are intriguing, her ideas perfectly targeted and her copy clean, concise and bang on brief. She makes my job easier every time I commission her, which I hope I’ll be doing for a long time to come.”

**Jennifer Crichton, Founder and Editor – The Flock**

“I have been commissioning Punteha for a couple of years now and she really is brilliant to work with. From her pitches it is always clear what points she wants to convey in her pieces. If it's a newsy topic

she pitches in good time, and she is open to discussing ideas in more detail. Her story ideas make it obvious she has read the section she is pitching to and knows the sort of topics we cover and the tone our articles take. She notices new series and comes brimming with new ideas and original takes. Her copy itself is always delivered on deadline and is to such a high standard that I know she can be relied upon for a strong piece. Punteha's success rate when it comes to pitching is incredibly high and I'm sure her advice on securing commissions would be incredibly valuable.”

**Jess Austin, First-Person and Opinion Editor –  
Metro.co.uk**

“I have known Punteha since she was a student, and she regularly gives career advice to my students. She gives particularly skilled pitching tips which are easy to follow, apply and give confidence. The students really relate to her, and several have told me they have taken the advice and used it to enable them to get their own freelance work. I am sure her book will be equally accessible and useful.”

## **Sharon Maxwell Magnus, Head of Media – University of Hertfordshire**

“From pitch to publication, Punteha delivers it all quickly and seamlessly. Her ideas for reports are current and impactful, her real-life stories are warmly told with lots of heart, and quality copy is delivered on time, with no detail overlooked. The trust she has built up within the industry is to be admired. Whenever her name pops into my inbox, I know it’ll be a powerful pitch, which turns into a beautifully done feature, each and every time.”

## **Sian Gregory, Commissioning Editor – Take a Break/Take a Break monthly**

“Punteha truly understands the mags she pitches to – and she understands their readers. Her emails land in the right inbox and contain meticulous pitches with eye-catching hooks and all the info our editors need to know before making a commission. Plus, her word-perfect, legally-sound copy never disappoints.”

## **Kate Williams, Editor – Chat**

“Punteha is an excellent and trustworthy freelance journalist. She writes with passion on numerous subjects and brings real emotion to first-person stories. Her pitches are always attention-grabbing, detailed and timely and I know that when I commission her work it will be beautifully written, factual and accurate. Not only that, but she also delivers it quickly and professionally. She is a name that I trust to always deliver.”

**Zoe Pinks, Health Editor – Take a Break**

“Punteha has consistently pitched us captivating, unique and well-researched ideas, which translate into powerful features. She is dependable, thorough and always meets deadlines, no matter how urgent.”

**Bess Browning, Features Editor/ Commissioning Editor - Chat/Woman/Woman's Own**

“I have been lucky enough to edit several books ghost-written by Punteha and she has always been a delight to work with. She adapts her approach to

suit each individual project and author and has a knack for bringing out the best in her interviewees.”

**Fiona Crosby, Senior Commissioning Editor – Book Publishing (Headline/Penguin Random House)**

**And some reviews from readers of this book:**

“Punteha's book should be made a mandatory resource for NCTJ students; there is a lot here that is very often not taught, such as how to negotiate particular types of rights, how to formulate pitches and negotiating the terms of the contract thereafter. This would have been so useful to me as a student – if only I could go back and give myself a copy!”

**Lydia Wilkins, freelance journalist and copywriter**

“The 10-Point Pitching Plan is my light-in-the-dark comfort blanket for breaking into freelance journalism. Terminology is broken down to make the language sensical to a novice like myself. Punteha's candidness with her own experiences – great and challenging alike – really serve to remind us that freelancing can be a road fraught with



rejection and ambiguities, but her guide is the way to overcome that hurdle and land your dream commissions.”

### **Dec Bowring, freelance journalist**

“This book is amazing. As a student journalist trying to establish myself in the freelance journalism world, I have no doubt the content of this book will allow me to land pitches as it's made it so easy to identify where I'm falling short and going wrong. Punteha makes everything so accessible and easy to understand, from the levels of exclusivity you can offer on a story to crafting a subject line guaranteed to capture an editor's attention.

Reading Punteha's pitches and understanding why they were commissioned, which is clearly bullet-pointed, will make it so much easier to implement the tips into my own pitching. This book is a must-read if you're looking to step up your pitching game, no matter if you're just starting out in the freelance journalism world or not.

Punteha's experience as a commissioning editor means you get insider tips and tricks, and makes

you consider things you wouldn't have before. I'd definitely recommend this book as it's great value for money and comes from a journalist you know you can trust.”

**Katie Wheatley, freelancer and student journalist**

Heard enough? [Buy The 10-Point Pitching Plan.](#)

...

**Still not sure?** If you secure just one commission as a result of reading **The 10-Point Pitching Plan**, you will likely make back double what you paid me. If you bag just one commission in print as a result of my techniques, you're looking at a minimum 500% return. And that's just your first commission.

**Here's exactly how I got to those numbers...**

In my experience, the average digital rates paid by national newspapers for an exclusive feature published online vary from £100-300.

Independent digital outlets typically start at £40 and go up to £150, but usually pay around the £75-100 mark. So, if you pay £49 for my book and get one commission at £100, you're making double what you paid me.

When it comes to fees for print, I find the lowest fee for an exclusive in a women's consumer magazine is typically £300. So, if you're paying £49 for my book, and get just one commission in a mainstream consumer magazine, that's a 512% return.

**Your returns could easily be greater.** Print fees are typically better in tabloid newspapers where a page lead can bag you around £400 as a minimum. If you sell a spread, that's potentially £750-1000 or more. Of course, standard rates vary from title to title and section to section, but these are the minimum fees I have seen over the five years I have been a freelance journalist specialising in true-life stories and features.

You can judge it for yourself based on the fees of titles you hope to work with. Take a look at reported rates across many titles in the UK and beyond at [Journo Resources](#).

[Buy the 10-Point Pitching Plan.](#)

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