



Week 1 Exercises

In Training – The Perfect Pitch

Icebreaker Activity

Over the next four weeks, you will have the opportunity to know a community of writers who are also on the path to being published. Make the most of your shared experience by getting to know the others in the course, so you will feel comfortable sharing examples of your pitch materials and giving and receiving feedback.

WHAT TO DO:

Introduce yourself to your online classmates. Go to the **Icebreaker Forum** and introduce yourself to the group. Do this by sharing three details about yourself, just to break the ice.

- What did you have for dinner last night?
- Where were you born?
- What book would you most recommend and why?

Feel free to ask questions and interact with your fellow students – getting to know each other is what the exercise is all about!

EXAMPLE:

Hi, I'm Sally. Here's a bit about me:

- *I had pasta with tomato and basil sauce – the easiest thing I could find in the cupboard after a long workday!*
- *I was born in Sydney – still my favourite city in the world after living in London, Brisbane and California.*
- *Right now, I would really recommend Geraldine Brook’s ‘Caleb’s Crossing’ for its amazing evocation of another era. Truly transporting literature!*



Elevator Pitch Activity

An elevator pitch is the description you might give someone who asks about your novel, that is short enough to deliver in an elevator ride (hence the name!). You don't have much time, so your pitch needs to give a concise yet enticing sense of what your manuscript is about. Enough so that when the elevator “dings” and you have to get off, your companion (who happens to be head of a prestigious publishing company!) hands you his/her card and asks you to send them more material.

WHAT TO DO:

This activity comes in two parts: writing and critiquing.

Part One: Writing Your Pitch

Write between 100 and 200 words for your “elevator pitch”.

For fiction, include the five Cs: Category (genre), Called (title), Concept (the overarching idea), Conflict (the main obstacle or problem to overcome), and Characters.

For non-fiction, aim for GNEPS: Genre, Name, Expertise (why you are the best person to write it), Problem (what you are solving), Solution.

- Write it offline.
- Once you are finished, post your pitch in the **Elevator Pitch Forum**.

EXAMPLES:

On her blog QueryTracker, writer Carolyn Kaufman gives some great examples of “concept sentences” or loglines for *Gladiator* and *Titanic*:

“When a Roman general is betrayed and his family murdered by an insane and corrupt prince, he comes to Rome as a gladiator to seek revenge.”

“A young man and woman from different social classes fall in love, and must outwit her abusive fiancé, while trying to survive aboard an ill-fated voyage at sea.”

A fully fleshed-out version of the *Gladiator* pitch could read something like:

*“I’ve written a historical drama called *Gladiator*. A man robbed of his name and his dignity strives to win them back, and gain the freedom of his people. In the year 180, the death of emperor Marcus Aurelius throws the Roman Empire into chaos. Maximus is one of the Roman army’s most capable and trusted generals and a key advisor to the emperor. As Marcus’ devious son Commodus ascends to the throne, Maximus is set to be executed. He escapes, but he is captured by slave traders and his family is killed. Forced to become a gladiator, Maximus’s battle skills serve him well, and he becomes one of the most famous and admired men to fight in the Colosseum. Maximus believes that he can use his fame and skill in the ring to avenge the loss of his family and former glory. As the gladiator begins to challenge his rule, Commodus decides to put his own fighting mettle to the test by squaring off with Maximus in a battle to the death.”*

Part Two: Pitch Feedback

Sharpen your positive critical skills by returning to the pitches that you shared in Part One.

Choose three of the pitches and reply to the posts offering some critical feedback to support your fellow writer to sharpen their pitch. Offer:

- ONE overarching good thing about the pitch. Perhaps something that struck you when you first read it.
- ONE thing that caused you to pause or think that perhaps this might not be the story for you.

- ONE reason you might consider to read on, or perhaps offer a suggestion about something you wanted to know more about that wasn't included.

KEEP IN MIND: The way you improve your writing is to improve your ability to work out what works and what doesn't. Share your comments around so that everyone gets a couple of responses from their fellow writers.



Help

If you do not understand these activities or what is required of you, then post a question into the **Q&A Forum Thread**. The Site Administrator or one of your fellow course mates will offer you some advice. If you find you require further help contact the Queensland Writers Centre via email on support@awmonline.com.au or call during business hours, Monday to Friday, AEST, on (07) 3842 9952

Week 1 Exercise Checklist

- Icebreaker Activity:** Introduce yourself to the group with a short bio on the **Icebreaker Forum**.
- Elevator Pitch Activity:** Write your own 100-200 word elevator pitch and post it in the **Elevator Pitch Forum**. Once you've posted, provide critical feedback on at least three other pitches from your peers.