

# Pitching to editors

*By Toby Moses, TV Editor, The Guardian*

## opinion



Comment is free...  
but facts are sacred  
CP Scott, 1921 Guardian editor

### Labour MPs owe a duty to the country - not Corbyn's absurd three-line whip Polly Toynbee

Many will lose seats for failing to obey their Brexit-voting electorates. They should do it anyway. They have a higher responsibility

1,253



### The anti-Trump resistance will fail if we don't ditch establishment Democrats Bhaskar Sunkara

### Dogs don't like reggae - they love it: 10 top tracks to play for your best friend Rhik Samadder

198



### In a post-truth world, statistics could provide an essential public service John Pullinger

147

### To defeat Trumpism will take an extraordinary popular resistance Owen Jones

518

### Calling the Holocaust 'sad' is the first step towards denying it ever happened Jonathan Freedland



### This Trump petition shows UK citizens will not bend a knee to hate Suzanne Moore

3,250



### Theresa May was right to see Donald Trump. But she has to condemn him too Jack Straw

I'm a Syrian refugee in the UK - join my protest against Trump

416



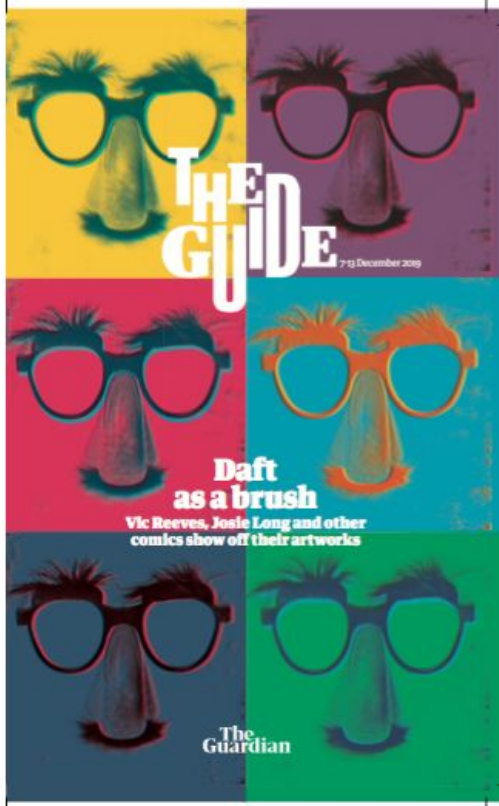
### Worried your partner might have a bisexual history? Why? Phoebe-Jane Boyd

208

### We need a Dump Trump foreign policy - otherwise the UK faces catastrophe Paul Mason

2,545

# Features



**I feel like I've lost 10 years of my life**  
**Leslie Ash**  
on surviving a superbug and saving her career

The Guardian

Monday 09/12/19

**Life & Arts**

**My radical rewilding**  
Rhik Samadder takes an ice bath  
page 3

**'On the night of the vote, thunder boomed...'**  
Europe in 11 poems  
page 10

07.12.19  
**Weekend**

Send to the clown Frankie Boyle's election diary  
How to speak human (and find love) on Tinder  
Pave the parcel, again: a guide to secondhand gifts

**Ray of light**

The force is strong with Daisy Ridley

The Guardian

## The rise of the reader

Katharine Viner



“We are no longer the all-seeing all-knowing journalists, delivering words from on high ... Digital has wrecked those hierarchies almost overnight, creating a more levelled world, where responses can be instant, where some readers will almost certainly know more about a particular subject than the journalist, where the reader might be better placed to uncover a story”  
From *The Rise of the Reader*, 2013

# Find your passion



Bird-watching



Politics



Housing



Childcare



Singing



Cooking



Vinyl records



Poker



Royalty



Business



Fine Art



Handwriting



Scotland



Alcohol



Wealth



Africa



Sex



Education



Climate change



Literature



# Find your voice



Read,  
read,  
read...

Mark Lawson



Aditya Chakraborty



Catherine Bennett



Barbara Ellen



Libby Brooks



Martin Kettle



Viv Groskop



Lola Okolosie



Hadley Freeman



Gary Younge



Andrew Rawnsley



Will Hutton



Simon Jenkins



Zoe Williams



Victoria Coren Mitchell



Nick Cohen



...write,  
write,  
write!



We need you!



# A news peg



- We stick very closely to the day's news
- If it doesn't have a news peg, we're unlikely to run it
- Pitch on the same day, or before, something hits the news pages



# Have fun

- Be opinionated, entertaining
- Write in your own voice
- Convince
- Don't second guess your critics
- Don't let your knowledge get in the way of your writing



# Be snappy



- We get 100s of pitches every day
- Quick, to the point
- Topic in subject line
- Why you?
- Why now?
- What's your argument?

# Be an expert

- What do you know that others don't
- Could be lived experience
- Could be education



# Be quirky



The  
Guardian

- Does not need to be news we've covered
- Look for the different, whether that's the peg or your angle
- Don't be predictable

# Don'ts

- Pre-write - we want to talk about the idea
- Send over more than one idea at a time
- Pitch on race/gender issues if you don't have first hand experience
- Pitch on something we've already covered
- Pitch on the biggest stories - we've got coronaviruscovered
- Pitch a 3,000 piece to opinion
- Call- we have email now
- Repeatedly hassle
- Use unsubstantiated stats/'facts'



## First steps

- 1 Before you pitch: research the publication.
- 2 Work out when best to pitch. (Never rush unless you have to.)
- 3 Send one idea at a time, to one outlet at a time.
- 4 Use the subject field wisely.
- 5 Read the pitch through before you press send.

## A pitch must answer 3 key questions

1

What is the story (or argument)?

2

Why now (or why should we care)?

3

Why you?



## What is the story (or argument)?

- 1 You should be able to express it in a sentence or two
- 2 A subject or a theme is not a story idea
- 3 An idea = (subject + angle + audience) + hook
- 4 Avoid known facts and obvious slants (nobody wants to publish what most people know)



## The second question

### What is the hook?

- 1 News?
- 2 If not news, why now: where does the sense of urgency come from?
- 3 And if no urgency, why should people care?

## Why me? I should write this piece because ...

- 1 I have a genuinely original idea (show, don't tell)
- 2 I am a brilliant writer (show, don't tell)
- 3 I have access to a person, or place, or some other material that others might not have access to
- 4 I have relevant expertise or personal experience

## And whatever you do ...

1

Use the subject  
field wisely

2

Include contact details

3

Include info about pictures if relevant

## Action points

1

If you get a 'no', persist. Learn from it and try to place the piece elsewhere.

2

If you get a 'yes':

- Deliver what you promised
- Get your facts right and credit sources
- Write it as well as time will allow; edit

## Now you are a published columnist

1

Engage with  
your readers

2

Thank your  
editor

3

Start work on  
next idea

# A good pitch



## Betting Shop Closures - An ex-employee's opinion on FOBTs and social responsibility

Inbox x Opinion main x



Fri, 5 Jul, 15:20 (3 days ago)



To Whom it May Concern,

Your recent articles regarding the potential closure of hundreds of high street bookmakers has prompted me to write an opinion piece. I have seen you do not require a fully written article, so I have given the first few paragraphs below:

*'With the announcement of hundreds of betting shop closures, the only ones who deserve sympathy are the employees, and those who fell victim to the bookmaker's deceit.*

*Since the introduction of the FOBT machine in 2001, UK bookmakers have been ever increasingly responsible for social degradation within our communities. Gambling; it has always been a vice for those with either enough disposable income that it is only the winning that counts, or for those less fortunate it is the allure of that quick monetary gain. But there is something sinister about the FOBT, in that it has increased accessibility to quick winnings or losses on our high street in an environment more akin to a miniature casino.*

*I worked in the industry as a branch manager for over twelve years, and I can tell you first hand that these companies view social responsibility as a check-box exercise in order to keep trading, with more training time given to the launch of a new FOBT product than to social responsibility awareness'.*

I believe that this article could do with publication, as it is relevant to current affairs in this industry. As the bookmaking industry faces more and more pressure, the general public may take interest in hearing how these companies have faced this growing criticism through the eyes of an ex-employee. I believe I am the right person to contribute such an opinion piece, as I worked in the industry for over a decade, and I have simply 'seen it all'.

- Has a clear description in the subject line
- Explains why now
- Explains why you should write it
- Is no more than a few lines

# Pitch, pitch, pitch

- Don't be put off by rejections
- [toby.moses@theguardian.com](mailto:toby.moses@theguardian.com)
- [opinion@theguardian.com](mailto:opinion@theguardian.com)
- [G2@theguardian.com](mailto:G2@theguardian.com)



# Over to you

- Look beyond the big stories
- Think about your expertise
- How does your life relate to the news?
- What makes you angry?
- What could you say that nobody else could?

