



Freelance Writer's

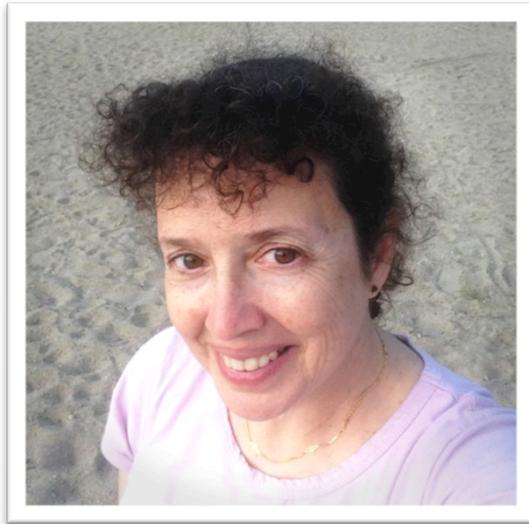
# Pitch Clinic



## Module 2: Anatomy of a Killer Query



# Meet the instructors



Carol Tice



Linda Formichelli

# **What's a query?**

**Your idea.**

**Why you're the perfect person to write it.**



# **Query first**

**Pre-written articles  
are hard to sell...**

**...and often pay less  
if they do.**

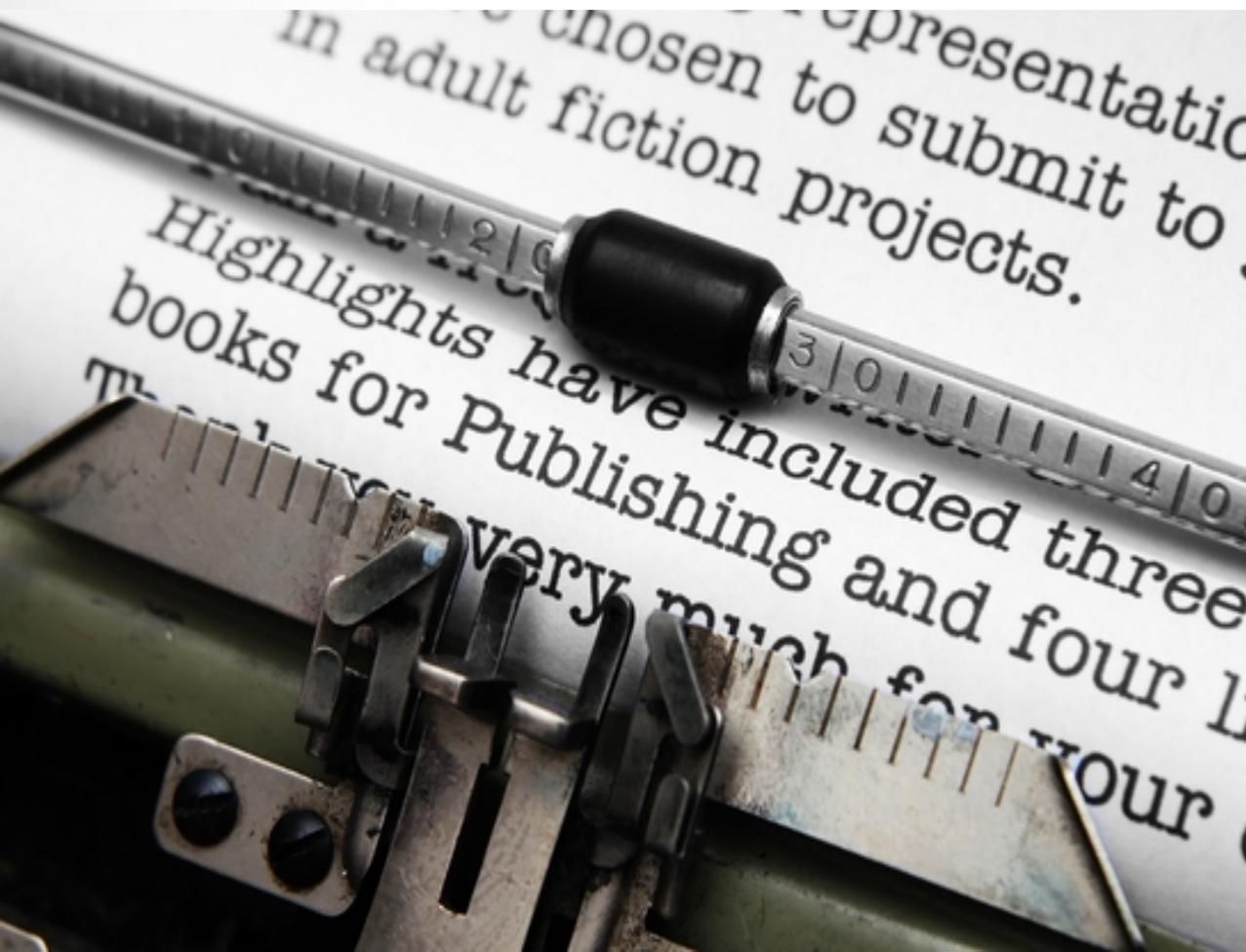


# Get an assignment!

Your contract will have  
all the details –  
including story length,  
pay and payment terms



# Yes, it's work...



**But writing a strong query is the best way to get \$\$ \$ gigs.**

# 7 ELEMENTS OF GREAT QUERIES

1. The Greeting
2. The Lede
3. The Nut Graf
4. The Body
5. Your Credentials
6. The “Ask”
7. The Closer



# 1. THE GREETING

**Find a real name!**

**Mr. vs “Hey Joe –”**



# 1. THE GREETING



**When in  
doubt – go  
informal**

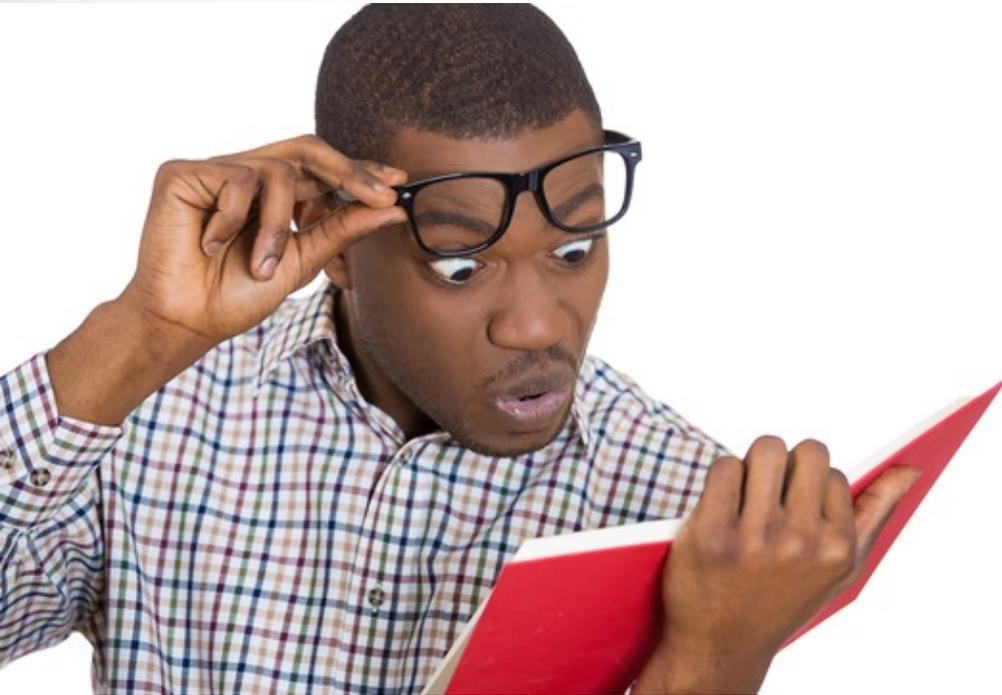




# **What's a Lede?**

**(Yes, that's how  
it's spelled!)**

# 2. THE LEDE



**Grabs the editor & makes them want to keep reading**

**Sets up the idea**

**Echoes how you would write the article**

# 2. THE LEDE

**2 approaches:**

**1. Dive right in!**

**2. Do a quick intro**

**Make sure readers  
can relate**



## 2. THE LEDE



**Include the reader:**

*You had a little too much wine at that girl's night out, and now you're paying for it. Or you gulped down two venti mochaccinos to get revved up after a bad night's sleep, and now you're more jittery than cat at a dog convention.*

# 2. THE LEDE

Use the ‘reported essay’ approach & your own anecdote:

*“Last year I attended the first session of a group therapy stress reduction course. When the man across from me shared how his marriage was falling apart, I sniffled. When the woman next to him described her travails with chronic pain, fat tears rolled down my cheeks. By the time we got to the woman whose unborn baby needed open heart surgery, people were passing ME wads of Kleenex.*

*I'm an intuitive empath.”*



## 2. THE LEDE

**Use an anecdote/tell a little story:**

*Among Allen Hager's first clients after he opened his Right at Home senior care business in Omaha, Nebr. was an elderly farmer named Art....*



# 2. THE LEDE

**Create a little mystery or bust a myth:**

*Online markets always pay less than print publications, right?*

*Not necessarily...*



# 3. THE NUT GRAF

**Explain the gist**

**Include stats/research**

**State your headline!**

**Might be more than one paragraph**



# 3. THE NUT GRAF

**Give it a news hook!**

**What makes it timely?**

**Why does an editor  
need to run this NOW?**





# 3. THE NUT GRAF

*“Nineteen years on, that’s proved to be a winning formula for Hager, 57. A former hospital administrator, he trained and worked as a certified nursing aide before launching his startup, to better understand the concerns of the aides he employed. Today, Right at Home offers services ranging from help with chores to in-home nursing. The company has nearly 400 locations in eight countries and hit \$265 million in 2013 systemwide revenue. Corporate’s cut approached \$17 million last year.*”

# 3. THE NUT GRAF

Share the gist:

*“In my article, [YOUR HEADLINE HERE], readers will learn X”*



# 3. THE NUT GRAF

**Example:**



*In my article "Boost Your Shine: Taking Your Life to the Next Level," I'll talk with experts to tell Health's readers how to go from good to great in five key areas of their lives. For example:*

# 4. THE BODY

**Fill in the details**

**“My story will explain how readers can X”...**

**“I’ll have exclusive information on X...”**



# 4. THE BODY

**Show, don't tell**

**NOT “This will be a fascinating story.”**

**Instead, write that fascinating lede.**



# 4. THE BODY

**Do pre-interviews**

**Yes, people *\*will\** talk to you!**

**Explain who you'll quote and their qualifications.**



# 4. THE BODY

**Consider including subheads:**

*Health: From "Feeling Good" to "Feeling Amazing."*



# 5. CREDENTIALS

**Be concise**

**Keep it simple**

**Don't say what you don't know or can't do**

**Your idea makes the sale – not your bio**



# 5. CREDENTIALS

**Have no clips or degree? Sell your life experience**

**Draw from:**

- **Current or former jobs**
- **Your education**
- **Your hobby**
- **Personal experience**



# 6. THE 'ASK'



Make it clear you're a freelance writer, not a PR person, and ask to write the story:

*I know Women's Health's readers are looking for new, surprising ways to boost their -- well, health! "Kick It Down a Notch: How Slowing Your Pace Can Rev Up Your Health" won't disappoint them. Would you like me to write this article for you?*

# 7. THE CLOSER

**Be creative & memorable**

**Not stiff & formal**

**Don't beg or plead**



# **BONUS: Great Email Subject Lines**

## **Goals:**



- **Clarify you're a writer, not a PR person**
- **Intrigue the editor and get them to click**

# **BONUS: Great Email Subject Lines**

1. “Freelance writer for Redbook, Woman’s Day & more.”

2. [Your article headline here]

3. “Freelance writer with a story idea for you.”





Freelance Writer's

# Pitch Clinic



## Module 3: How to Write a Kick-Butt LOI

