

This Week's Focus: Pitching a Story

Great narrative content starts with the “pitch,” but pitching — or “selling” — your story idea to an editor is one of the hardest journalistic skills to develop. Reporters often complain there’s nothing to write about and editors, in turn, complain that their staff planning meetings are often fruitless. Good story ideas are more than just topics; they also include a definitive angle — something you want your readers to think about that topic. For more about the process, NPR posted [this great article](#) with advice about how to pitch a story.

THE LESSON: PITCH A STORY

I created [this form](#) to help my students through the process of pitching a story to their editors. You’ll notice it asks reporters to walk through specific questions including the topic, the angle (or journalistic question) and the story’s news value using the elements of news.

Feel free to use and/or modify the form to suit your needs. Some of my editors even turned the items on the sheet into a Google Doc that they send to their reporters each issue cycle. That way they can create a spreadsheet of all of their reporters’ ideas to make the process more streamlined.

FIND IT AT JEA.ORG Story Pitch Meetings

Description

Presenting a story idea to editorial decision-makers is an important stage of the production process. Not only does it give reporters the opportunity to show they have viable coverage ideas, but it also provides a forum for students to develop their presentation skills. In this lesson, students will analyze how to use the 5Ws and H to test their story idea and present it in a concise manner.

Objectives

- Students will develop and practice the understanding of the 5Ws and H in story development.
- Students will prioritize the 5Ws and H to prove a viable story idea.
- Students will practice how to present their story ideas in a concise manner.
- Students will establish the foundation of a coverage library and story index.

The link

The link to the full lesson is [HERE](#). NOTE: This lesson is available free to **everyone** during the dates listed at the top of this page. Want to have access all the time? If you’re not a member yet, consider joining JEA today for access to all of the resources.



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Get curriculum help

JEA to offer sessions in Boston with curriculum experts

Are you having trouble with your curriculum? Are you struggling to create a meaningful scope and sequence? Do you even know where to start? We can help. JEA curriculum pros will be at the Fall JEA/NSPA National High School Journalism Convention in Boston to offer individual, personalized consultations Nov. 2 and 3 for advisers in half-hour or one-hour increments.

How it will work

- **Step 1:** Reserve a spot by filling out [THIS GOOGLE FORM](#). Sessions will be \$25 per half hour. Sessions are limited, so sign up early.
- **Step 2:** JEA staff will assign you a slot (or slots) based on availability and when you plan to attend the convention.
- **Step 3:** Show up for your meeting (locations to be determined), bring your questions and go!

You've Got Style

*Suggestions from Cindy**

AGES

Always use figures for ages.

That is true even for a 3-week-old infant. Use hyphens for ages expressed as adjectives before a noun or as substitutes for a noun.

Only use ages in a story if they are relevant to the situation.

Examples:

- *The 14-year-old was driving.*
- *She turned 16 yesterday.*
- *The school is 100 years old.*

* Style pro Cindy Horchem, CJE, is a retired adviser and the current JEA business and projects coordinator

MEET THE TEAM



JEA Curriculum Specialist Jim Streisel, MJE, is the adviser of the HiLite news staff at Carmel (Indiana) High School. He's a former DJNF Adviser of the Year.



Meag Abo is the media adviser at Bryant (Arkansas) Junior High School, advising multiple publications. Her program has earned multiple national awards.