

Science Journalism Summer School 2021

17:00 Speed pitching

Session moderator: Katrina Wesenraft, ABSW Board member

Speed pitching is a great way to meet editors, practice your pitching skills and get instant feedback on how to make a story idea work for their publications.

Select a relevant editor using the guide below and sign up for a one-on-one time slot using the form below. You will get three minutes to pitch, followed by three minutes of feedback, so use your time wisely!

Our seven editors are:

- [Tushna Commissariat, *Physics World*](#)
- [Kate Douglas, *New Scientist*](#)
- [Richard Gray, *BBC Future*](#)
- [Helen Pearson, *Nature*](#)
- [Inga Vesper, *Research Professional News*](#)
- [Neil Withers, *Chemistry World*](#)

The speed pitching surgeries are likely to be over-subscribed so register your interest today to secure a slot with the editor of your choice. We will confirm your surgery appointment by Wednesday 07 July.

Details of our six editors and their areas of interest:

[Tushna Commissariat, *Physics World*](#)

Physics World provides scientists in academic and industry research stay up to date with the latest breakthroughs in physics and interdisciplinary science, with a daily mix of news, opinion and long-form articles.

Although *Physics World* is aimed at an academic audience, our publication is a magazine, and not a peer-reviewed journal – so our features are written in an engaging and informal style.

The article should be written at a “popular” level such that it can be easily understood by a mid-course undergraduate physics student. We encourage our authors to write in first person (where applicable), recall anecdotes and offer an informed opinion on a topic.

Our features are written by both academics and freelance writers – academic authors usually write about their own research and specializations, while our freelancers cover wider topics that require speaking to a number of scientists and covering a broader range of research papers to give an overview of a topic.

While our readers love features on quantum mechanics and tech, astronomy and cosmology and medical physics, I am always looking for features on a topic/subject area in physics that isn't as popularly covered – this could be areas of physics including condense-matter physics, photonics, future tech but also areas such as science and society/art; physics and ethics; articles based on a certain lab/location.

I am also keen to feature a wide variety of diverse people doing science across the globe, and telling their stories.

[Kate Douglas, New Scientist](#)

New Scientist is the world's most popular weekly science and technology publication. Our website, app and print editions cover international news from a scientific standpoint, and ask the big-picture questions about life, the universe and what it means to be human.

I commission feature-length articles. That means pitches must be more than just a description of a recently published paper – or even several papers covering a particular a given topic – no matter how fascinating. Features need to tell a story. There are many ways to do this, but a good place to start is to ask the question “why?” – why does this research matter? Why are readers going to want to know about it?

I'm interested in all aspects of “big biology” including human and animal behaviour, evolution, psychology, ecology and anthropology. I also commission stories based in genetics and neuroscience – provided they build a big picture. My beat does not include medicine.

[Richard Gray, BBC Future](#)

BBC Future is a features site for the insatiably curious. We try to guide our readers through a fast-paced, ever-changing world with in-depth, detailed features journalism about stories that matter. While we are primarily a science and technology website, we cover a wide range of topics – from food to psychology, engineering to mathematics, social trends to economic science, health to climate change.

We don't pretend to have the definitive answer to everything but aim to provide the most up-to-date information and research, and acknowledge that scientific understanding, like the world around us, is constantly moving forward and changing. We publish in-depth, long-form articles that are relevant, but not newsy. They can explain something that is in the news, but not news articles. We also often cover topics that don't make the daily news cycle, subjects that are overlooked and ignored.

We are looking for features that tell engaging stories, are packed with emotion and eye-catching anecdotes. We want to shine a light on topics, communities or parts of the world that are too often overlooked. We are love new science and innovation, but we are also fascinated by people, so look out for good characters or personal stories that we can hand the story around. We want original thinking and powerful storytelling that is backed up by evidence about issues that are in the news, or at least should be in the news. We are particularly interested in solutions to the problems the world is facing. No topic is too small or too big for us to tackle.

We have a global audience who like to read stories from right around the world. We want stories from your neighbourhood or community that could provide a solution to wider problems. We want science that is solving mysteries and helping others. We are looking for untold tales that deserve attention and facts that will get people talking.

Most of all we want your curiosity. Tell us about the topics and stories that you are most passionate about. If you are curious about something, then there is a good chance we will be too.

First, please do take a look through some recent stories on www.bbc.com/future for an idea of our style. Our features are primarily evidence-based, but tend to be a blend of human stories, facts and science. We want our readers to learn something each time they visit our website, and it would be great if, while writing for us, you learned some astonishing new facts too. Our readers are educated and professional - and want to be inspired and entertained.

I am not interested in narrow focused news stories or anything that could be classed as “futuresology” (ie crystal ball gazing), or stories about scientific tools or methods or techniques. We also don't want pseudoscience, or anything not backed up by solid research/evidence.

Some tips for pitching

For pitches, please keep it brief (200 words max – I get a lot of pitches and I'm going to be put off if I have to read 1,000 words) and most importantly, I need to know what the nub par for the article is: why are we writing about this now and why is it important to our readers. If you are feeling confident, please also have a stab at distilling the story down into a headline or two of no more than 90 characters. You'll be surprised by how that focuses your pitch. Please make sure the science backs up what you are pitching and provide some relevant links. If you have some ideas of the kind of people you might speak to for your piece too, that is also helpful, but not essential nor does it have to be exhaustive.

[Helen Pearson, Nature](#)

Nature is an international science journal that publishes news, features and opinion articles about all aspects of research and the research community, including discoveries and issues such as funding, careers and science publishing.

Your pitch should make clear why the story is of interest to our global audience of working scientists, why we should publish it now (what's the peg) and how your story would add something fresh or be different from those in other outlets.

[Inga Vesper, Research Professional News](#)

Research Professional News is the world's leading source of research policy and funding news

I am looking for hard news stories (500 words max) in science policy, funding, cooperation, academia, research management

I'm not interested in research results, scientific achievements, products, business R&D (unless university-related)

[Neil Withers, Chemistry World](#)

Chemistry World is the flagship magazine of the Royal Society of Chemistry. Published in print and online, we provide a global chemical science community with the research, news and views they need to keep informed on the breakthroughs, challenges and emerging trends happening worldwide.

Although our print audience is largely UK-based, our online readership is global: visitors from the US are typically a third of our traffic each month, with the UK, India, Australia and Canada strongly represented. As you'd expect, we're heavily chemistry-focused, but try to present as broad a coverage as possible – everything to do with atoms and molecules from hydrogen bonds to gene editing. Our audience know their chemistry – we don't have to explain terms like NMR or chirality to them – and want to know the latest developments.

As features editor, I'm interested in longer articles that tell a story; normally 2,200–3,000 words. I want a writer to guide me through a topic I'm probably aware of, but don't know about in depth. Ideally, they'll thread together input from 4-5 experts who are looking at the topic from different angles to give the reader the whole picture.

I'm not interested in anything too far from chemistry, or anything [we've had a feature on in the last few years](#).

[Book a speed pitching surgery with one of our editors today](#)