

Market Match

By Linda Sherwood

After you've studied a market, you will want to develop a query letter -- a one page letter that explains your idea, how it fits that specific market and why you are the person to write the article.

When I write a query, the first paragraph I write usually ends up being the first paragraph of the article. The first sentence for both the query letter and the article have the same purpose - to make the reader interested in reading more. In the query letter, it also demonstrates the tone of the article that I am pitching, so the editor can see how it will fit in with their publication.

In most cases, you won't write the actual article until after the editor has accepted the article based on your query letter. Most of the work in writing a nonfiction article happens after the editor accepts your query letter. An exception would be for an essay, especially a humor essay. In that case, the editor is going to want to read the entire essay before agreeing to publish it.

Matching Tone to Market

Even when you have the same topic, the tone will vary depending on how or where you plan to pitch it. To demonstrate this, I've used one basic idea and written several different first paragraphs of a possible query letter. This is purely to demonstrate how the same idea can be used for a wide variety of markets, and how important it is to match your tone



to your market.

The basic premise for all of these pitches is a snake being inside a home instead of outside where it belongs.

Humor Essay...

Barely awake and without the aid of coffee, I trudge through my living room on my way to the kitchen. I barely noticed my three oldest children were all huddled together in a single chair. The girls, ages 5, 4, and 2, were being unusually quiet and Maxine, the two-year-old, wasn't demanding breakfast. I should have known something was wrong.

Woman's magazine....

When the outdoors comes indoors it takes more than screaming from your perch on the chair to show those unwanted visitors the way back outdoors. Joe Expert recommends....

Trade magazine...

Rodents and bugs are two of the leading causes hotel guests to lodge complaints. They are also two of the hardest things for hotel

management to keep a handle on. Exterminator Joe Expert has a solution....

How-to article....

When removing unwanted pests from your domicile, determining the extent of infestation is often the first step. To do that, call in the experts for a free evaluation.

For a true-story confession....

I'd never fallen in love before and I was convinced I never would. I changed my mind when Sam slithered into my life.

For a children's story....

Slithering Sam sat sunning himself of the slate-blue slab of rock.

For a newspaper story....

A mother of four was arrested today for indecent exposure. The mother's defense lawyer claims the woman ran into the street after waking up to find a snake in her bed. Police officials reportedly found a gardner snake in the laundry room, which may confirm the woman's story.