

PITCHFEST FAQ

Q: What exactly is PitchFest and when is it?

A: On Thursday afternoon following CraftFest, we will host [PitchFest](#), where you can pitch your novel to some of the best agents, publishers, and editors in the business. Each year, we have over 50 agents, publishers, and editors attending this special event. Read about the incredible tales of success under the [Success Stories](#) tab. PitchFest has become the world's largest gathering of top agents, publishers, and editors looking for the next bestseller. More specifically, it is a three-and-a-half hour opportunity for writers to pitch their manuscripts to as many agents as they have the time and energy to meet.

Q: Can I really find an agent for my manuscript?

A: A number of authors have gotten representation from this event, including our very own PitchFest Director, Sandra Brannan, who found her agent through pitching. Several writers' manuscripts have become real, published works, as evidenced by a few sharing their [Success Stories](#). PitchFest, held every year on the Thursday afternoon following CraftFest, is designed for authors who want to pitch their work to the agents, publishers, and editors who volunteer to hear the pitches.

Q: Are these real agents, publishers, and editors or the kind that say they are the real deal but charge me to read my manuscript and then steer me into vanity presses?

A: Our agents, publishers, and editors are the real deal. They are or sell to major publishers around the world, and they are highly respected in the field. They do not charge a fee to read your work, and they do not steer you toward vanity presses. (Which, for those unfamiliar with the term, are companies that will "publish" your book only if you pay them.) Our agents only work with publishers who pay YOU for your writing. All agents who attend PitchFest are either members of AAR, or they have sold to an ITW-approved publisher. Only ITW-approved publishers and editors are invited.

Q: Are they taking new clients?

A: Every agent, publisher, and editor who attends is actively seeking thriller manuscripts, and many are looking for other things in addition: mystery, suspense, romance, non-fiction, supernatural, and other genres. [Review the](#)

[participating bios and photos](#) on the ThrillerFest website for what each is looking for and what they are not looking for.

Q: When is PitchFest?

A: PitchFest is held on Thursday from 2:00 pm - 4:30 pm during the ThrillerFest week, with Power Hour from 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm. Feel free to take breaks whenever you need as you are free to wander from room to room and stand in line for whichever agent, publisher, or editor you'd like.

Q: How does PitchFest work?

A: We recommend you study the bios of the agents, editors, and publishers before arriving at the PitchFest event and prioritize whom you would like to visit based on the best fit for you and your manuscript. Once you have your prioritized list, you will find the rooms are arranged alphabetically in four rooms from A-Z or Z-A. The tables are arranged around all four walls in each room. Stand in the line of a agent, editor, or publisher to whom you would like to pitch to and when they are free, have a seat, relax, and pitch your manuscript. They want to know about you too, and why you feel best qualified to write the story you did. This process may take 30 seconds or 5 minutes, but normally you will be done in 3 minutes. And just like speed dating, it serves you best to be prepared, concise, and succinct with your pitch. They may ask some questions or not, but normally you will hear them say they are not interested or give you instructions on how to send them your work if they are interested. Thank them for their time, then move to the next name on your list and make your next pitch. The main event is two-and-a-half hours, with an additional Power Hour immediately afterward, for a total of three-and-a-half hours of pitching time. If you are concerned about how to prepare, please attend Kathie Antrim and Jon Land's class during CraftFest to learn pitching tips and ideas from the experts.

Q: Why the distinction between PitchFest and Power Hour? Why not just a straight three-and-a-half hours?

A: Some of the agents, publishers, and editors can commit to two-and-a-half hours, others can commit to three-and-a-half. So make sure you visit with your highest priority ones in the first two-and-a-half hours because he or she may not be there for the Power Hour. We split the day into two parts: the main pitching event of two-and-a-half hours, at which everyone will appear, and the Power Hour extension, to accommodate those who are willing to stay longer for you.

Q: Is there anything besides PitchFest in which I can participate?

A: As a PitchFest attendee, Practice PitchFest occurs on Thursday just before PitchFest. We recommend you try out your pitch on these fabulous authors and hand-selected literary agents who can provide some last minute advice to you. Invaluable time with the experts.

As a writer, [Master CraftFest](#) on Tuesday is an excellent opportunity to have a bestselling author review and critique your work and/or impart pearls of wisdom you just can't get anywhere else. The classes are typically intimate, meaning ten writers assigned to one master teacher.

Also as a writer, [CraftFest](#) is an amazing opportunity to learn from bestselling authors and experts in the industry and is recommended if you want to attend PitchFest. PitchFest cannot be purchased as a single item (must either sign up for CraftFest or ThrillerFest) because we want you prepared and professional for the pitching sessions, or we may not have as many agents, publishers, and editors volunteer in the future. This is a business and they expect you to conduct yourselves accordingly. CraftFest will help you prepare for PitchFest and is held on Wednesday and Thursday morning, just before PitchFest.

Finally, [ThrillerFest](#) is an amazing opportunity Friday and Saturday to meet readers, authors, the media, and many others. And of course, the Thriller Awards Banquet is Saturday night.

Q: Do I have to have a completed manuscript, or can I just pitch what I have written so far or throw out an idea I have for a novel?

A: Having a completed manuscript is not mandatory to participate in PitchFest, but do your best to have one completed. We recommend this because we know from experience that if agents like what they see, they want to sign you as a client and sell your book immediately to a publisher. You want that, too. But they can't sell your book unless it's finished. And they may not be as interested months from now when you do finish it. So, do your best to type THE END before coming to PitchFest. That said, being only partway done is fine. Mentioning to an agent that you have an idea about a novel should only be offered if they ask what other ideas you have considered writing as a follow-up to the completed manuscript you are pitching. This is not practice. This is business.

Q: Do you assign me to agents, or do I pick?

A: Whom you pitch to is entirely up to you. Over the main event and Power Hour, you will have time to pitch to at least a half-dozen. Maybe a dozen. Possibly fewer. Possibly more. It depends upon the length of the lines and how you prioritized the ones you would like to see. Pitching that many traditionally through a letter or email would take months. At PitchFest, you accomplish that in one afternoon.

Q: Do I have to stay the whole three-and-a-half hours?

A: We do not take attendance. You can stay for one pitch, one hour, two hours, or the whole three-and-a-half. It's entirely up to you. Many authors have their list of six or twelve, and when they're done, they leave. Many more stay the entire time and see as many as they can. Pitching is a numbers game—the more you see, the more likely someone is to say yes. Also, just because a few told you to send them a partial or the first few pages does not mean they'll ultimately take you on as a client. So the more you can get to say they are interested, the better.

Q: Are the agents, publishers, and editors paid to be there?

A: Absolutely not. They are volunteers. They are investing their time hoping to find great stories written by decent people. The more passionate they are about the manuscript, the easier it will be to sell to publishers. Don't be discouraged if one of your top priority agents isn't interested in your story. That does not mean you don't have the right story. It's just not the right story for them. Move to the next one on your list.

Q: Whom do we turn to if we have a more specific question about PitchFest?

A: The organizers have assigned Sandra Brannan as the PitchFest Director. She is a volunteer author who is there for you with any questions or concerns you might have about PitchFest. Her contact information is Sandra@SandraBrannan.com or #SandraBrannanAuthor for FaceBook communications or @SandraBrannan on Twitter. She's been through PitchFest several times, finding her agent the second year she attended. And like most of the authors and writers who volunteer for ThrillerFest directors, Sandra is a thriller author who volunteers her time to help you. So please know, she truly is there to help you.

Q: If everyone is a volunteer, why am I charged to attend?

A: The cost to reserve the conference rooms, the pitch rooms, the book room, help from hotel staff, refreshments, air-conditioning, and keeping the

bathrooms fresh and breezy is why we charge for the event. Although our main purpose is to help writers make the necessary connections with people in the industry who can help them advance their careers, it takes money to provide the venue. Even the board of directors pay to attend the conference, just like you, which helps keep the costs down for everyone.

Q: Do people who attend PitchFest actually get representation?

A: Sometimes, but not all the times. Some of those who have gotten representation have shared their [success stories](#) with us. While there's NO GUARANTEE REAL OR IMPLIED that any agent will like your work—I made that all-caps to impress upon you that you might not get even a single solitary nibble—the opposite is equally true: they may all love your work. Some get representation but never a publishing deal. There is no definitive outcome here other than one: if you don't attend [PitchFest](#), those agents will miss an opportunity to hear you pitch.

Q: What's the worst that can happen at PitchFest?

A: Even if you have not one single agent interested in your story (which is incredibly rare), going through the process of pitching is still an enormously valuable experience. You will have met the top agents in the business, gone through the pitching experience, made valuable contacts, gotten feedback on your presentations, and learned a lot of things about the business. And, you'll have the inspiration you need to strengthen your book and come back next year.

Q: Walk me through the PitchFest process.

A: You and many other writers participate in [CraftFest](#) on Wednesday and Thursday morning. Practice PitchFest will be held in Ballroom I on the Ballroom level a couple of hours before PitchFest. Starting at around 1:30 p.m. Thursday afternoon, you may meet outside the Ballrooms on the Ballroom level (The Ballroom level is up the stairs, which are near the registration desk.). A volunteer will be there to direct you to where the line starts. Then at 2:00 p.m., we will escort you to the rooms where we hold the pitches. (The rooms will be familiar. They're the same rooms where you attended CraftFest classes.)

Note: The initial line into the rooms will be long, because there will be more than a hundred of you waiting single-file. Do not be concerned about the length. We have [dozens of agents](#) signed up and you will be able to talk to as many as you want, even if you're at the tail end of the line initially.

There are four rooms, each containing tables for the agents, publishers, and editors. Each table has two chairs—one for you, one for them. They're spaced along all four walls, in alphabetical order from A-Z or Z-A. There is a sign at each entry door listing who is in that room, plus their name is posted over his or her table inside the room, so you can find them with a quick glance. You will already have decided which ones you want to see, based on [their bios](#) contained on this website. When the doors open at 2 pm, you will walk into the rooms and find an agent, publisher, or editor. On the wall taped behind them, you will find their name, what they are currently looking for, and what they are not looking for.

Q: How do they let me know if they like my pitch?

A: The agent says yes, no, or send me a partial or the entire manuscript to read, then dismisses the author and takes the next person standing in line. Newly freed, you go into another line and make your next pitch.

Q: How long is each pitch?

A: Three minutes, more or less.

Q: How will we know when to move to the next line?

A: The agent, publisher, or editor will tell you. We're giving them three-minute timers and/or having them manage their own schedules. Once they tell you they're not interested in your work or invite you to send them some pages as a sample, please thank them for his or her time and move on. You'll know.

We allow the agents, publishers, and editors more freedom in managing their own schedule because some can say yes or no in fifteen seconds, and thus hear more pitches during the event. Others require a minute, still others, three or four minutes, maybe even five or six. Each book idea is unique, so we decided to let them manage their own time clocks. Please, don't worry about any of this. Just relax, and concentrate on having a pleasant, lively discussion with them.

Q: Should I carry a stack of printed manuscripts in case an agent wants one?

A: No. Keep your manuscripts in your hotel room, or better yet, leave them at home. The agents will ask you to send one via mail or by email if they're interested. They don't want to haul a hundred pounds of manuscripts on the

subway when the day is over. And please don't hand agents a flash drive. Agents will not insert flash drives into their computers, for fear of viruses.

What is likely if an agent, editor, or publisher is interested in seeing your work, is that they will ask you to send some pages for them to review after the event. Don't panic. We have added some help for you to assess if your work is ready to submit. It's called the "No Pitch Zone".

We recommend that you bring a sample query letter and the first 10 pages of your manuscript so that you can seek advice from the experts in the "No Pitch Zone" we have added. The wonderful agents and editors volunteering in the "No Pitch Zone" are there to give you advice on improving your query letter as well as assessing your writing samples. This service is free for PitchFest attendees and occurs simultaneously with the later part of PitchFest and beyond an extra hour. Please have a sample query letter and 10 pages if you would like to ask experts how to submit, now that you have some PitchFest agents, editors, and publishers asking you to send them your work.

Q: Can I keep a copy on my computer or iPhone, so I can instantly e-mail it to the agents if they ask?

A: That's fine. If they want your manuscript e-mailed, they will give you their e-mail address and give you instructions.

Q: How about business cards?

A: Always a good idea to have business cards with you. Make sure your contact information is prominent, especially e-mail. You can get cards printed online, or at a local print shop. Two online shops I've used with great success: www.iconix.biz and www.vistaprint.com.

Q: Should I have a website?

A: A website is not needed at all for pitching. You should have one anyway, so people can find you easily. Two good places to reserve web names: www.networksolutions.com and www.godaddy.com. (Godaddy is cheaper, if that helps.) If you're not ready to build a website, at least reserve the domain name you'll want to use as a writer. That way it's there when you're ready to unveil yourself to the digital world.

Q: Last year, some authors brought one-page summaries of their books, which they could hand to the agents. Do you still recommend doing

that?

A: Agents generally prefer a simple business card, if anything. Shane Gericke, volunteer for past PitchFests and bestselling author, created a suggested template, which can be found at the bottom of this FAQ. It's essentially a one-page form that lists your name, contact information, story synopsis, and author bio. Some agents may want them, most don't. You may want to print up a dozen and bring them along, in case any of your agents ask for one. Most will not ask.

Q: Can I hop lines if mine is too long?

A: Absolutely. If the line you are in is long and you see a shorter one, feel free to move over (not cut in). Pitching is a numbers game: the more you talk to, the more likely you are to find one who wants what you're selling. By all means, have your list of whom you want to talk to. But try the others, too. You never know who's going to love your work. Only one rule for the lines: please don't cut. Be courteous and go to the back of the line.

Q: Can I go to the bathroom during the pitches?

A: You can take a break whenever you need. Go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, sit down, and take a deep breath. When you come back to the room all refreshed, join a new line, and please, don't cut.

Q: Can I practice my pitch while I'm in line?

A: Please don't. Every room will contain more than fifty people, simultaneously hearing and making pitches. That's a lot of noise, and the rooms don't need more. If you want to talk, please go into the hall. When you're sitting in that pitch chair and can hear the agent saying clearly, "I love this idea! Can you e-mail me the manuscript?" you'll thank me.

Q: Who will be there during PitchFest in case I have questions?

A: The PitchFest Director, Sandra Brannan, will be there the entire time. And she always carries ibuprofen, if you need it. Assistant Director Terry Rodgers and ThrillerFest Executive Director Kimberley Howe will also be there and open for questions. Plus, we'll have room captains—veteran author volunteers who know the pitching drill—at the doorway of every room. Ask them anything.

Q: What happens when it's over?

A: Pitching will be from 2:00 pm – 5:30 pm. When PitchFest is over, please feel free to take a break before the ThrillerFest Opening Cocktail Hour at

6:30 pm. Many of the agents, publishers, and editors will be attending the cocktail hour, too, so please be courteous and thank them for their time.

Q: Can I sign up ONLY for PitchFest?

A: In order to attend PitchFest, you must also sign up for either CraftFest or ThrillerFest. Although you can sign up for CraftFest or ThrillerFest, but not sign up for PitchFest, we don't allow you to sign up ONLY for PitchFest.

Again, we want to make sure you are as prepared and professional as possible before pitching. Agents' time is valuable so please prepare accordingly. Requiring CraftFest or ThrillerFest as a prerequisite for PitchFest helps ensure that only authors making a serious commitment to their craft or have made significant advances in their careers will get into the rooms, and that provides everyone with a better experience. After all, if the agents quit coming because the quality of pitching is poor or the writers are not professional, they'll never hear great ideas from serious writers like you.

Q: I've never made a book pitch. Will I learn how to pitch at CraftFest?

A: Yes, that's one of the goals at CraftFest: teaching you how to present your work to agents and editors, and close the sale with them. We provide a full presentation on effective pitching during CraftFest. Look for Kathie Antrim and Jon Land's class in the [CraftFest Schedule](#) as it gets closer to July to find the times.

Q: What should I wear that day? Suit and tie? Dress and high heels?

A: There's no dress code. Consider that you're trying to sell your work to major agents who are professional and expect you to take this process seriously. Dress like you respect them and the process. Business casual is recommended. Make sure you're wearing comfortable shoes. You'll be on your feet a lot.

Q: I want to thank the agents, publishers, and editors but I don't want to appear desperate or as a suck up.

A: By all means, thank them, and do so sincerely. It's not sucking up. And it doesn't sound desperate. It sounds courteous. Everyone likes to feel appreciated, and they are going out of their way to help you sell your book. They could just as easily stay in their offices and work.

Q: How do I contact someone if I have questions about PitchFest?

A: Drop Sandra Brannan, your PitchFest Director, an e-mail at

Sandra@SandraBrannan.com, Facebook message her under Sandra Brannan, Author (#SandraBrannanAuthor), or Tweet at @SandraBrannan. She'll be at ThrillerFest starting on Tuesday, so if you need something on-site, don't hesitate to hunt her down (to see what she looks like, check out her website at www.sandrabrannan.com). Contact her and she'll get back to you as quickly as possible.