

DFW Writers' Conference 2023

The
Pitch Your Book
Pitch Deck

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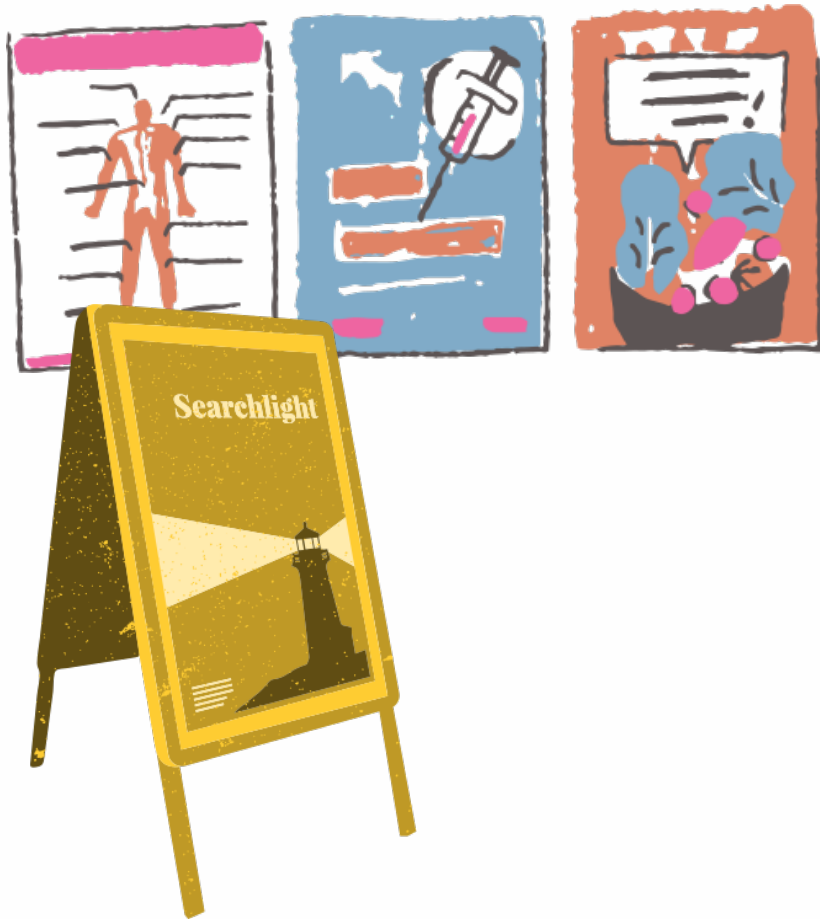


Define “Pitch”

- “Pitch” a product to a buyer or to investors
- “It’s Die Hard on a Bus”
- A 25-word description of your book
- A 30-second description of your book
- A 5-7 minute meeting to talk about your book (We’ll come back to this!)



These are also pitches:



- Movie trailers
- Back-cover copy
- The e-book blurb
- Your query letter. (We'll come back to this, too)

The Pitch Meeting



The Art of Interviewing

(AI Suggestion for "Slide deck with a job interview theme")



The Pitch Meeting

The Pitch Meeting



- The agent/editor wants to find projects to love.
- Your writing career doesn't all rest on this moment.
- Knowing what to expect makes anything less nerve-wracking.

The Pitch Meeting

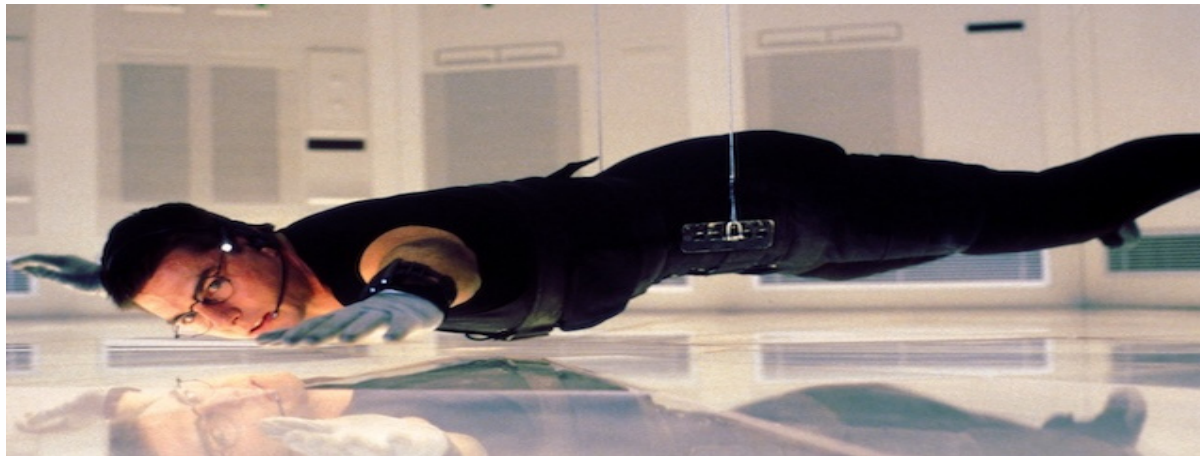


- What to expect and what's expected of you.
- Straightforward steps to a "read it now" pitch.

Your Mission

- Hook the listener with a short opening premise
- Invoke the imagination with **specific** and **strong** details
- Convey the **essence** of the story in 2-3 sentences
- Emphasize what's **unique** about your book...

In less than 2 minutes



In less than 2 minutes



But...but..but...

My precious world-building!

I have ten minutes!

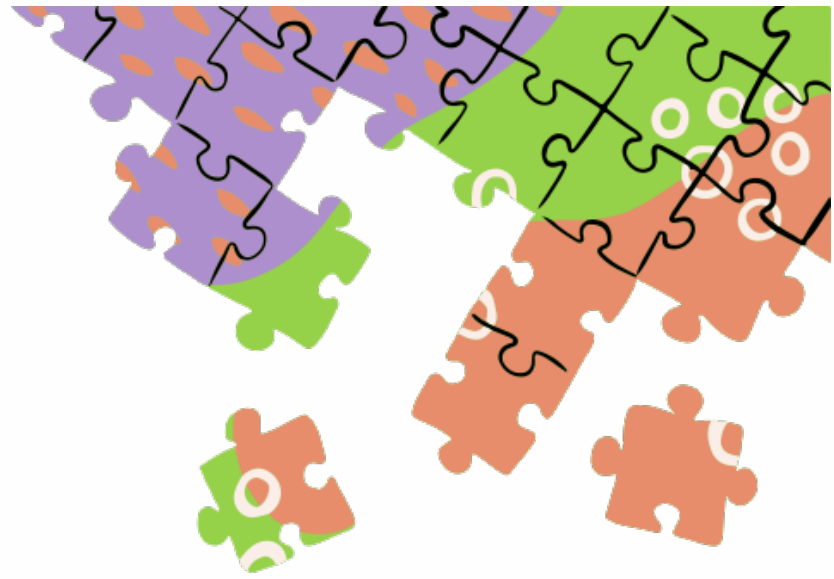
My labyrinthine plot!

Everything is important!



Break things down to make them less overwhelming.

- Logline or One-line premise
- 2-3 sentence pitch
- Follow-up discussion



The pitch is not the plot

- The plot is the things that happen in the book.
- The **synopsis** is a summary of the plot.

The pitch is about the
forces behind the events.



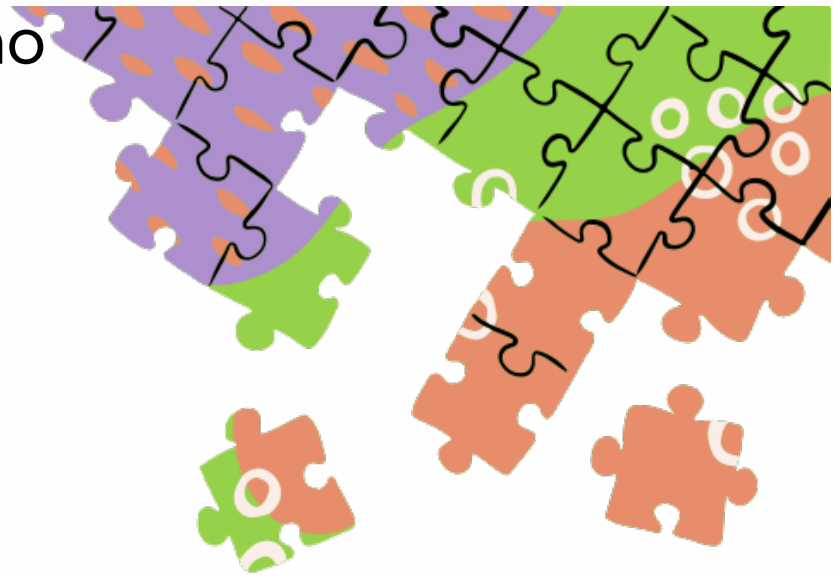
“What’s it about?”

Movie trailers don't give away the plot. They make you imagine what could be in the movie or even what it will feel like to watch.



What's the book about?

It's about this **character** who
has to do this really hard
thing **against these terrible**
odds or else this terrible
thing will happen.



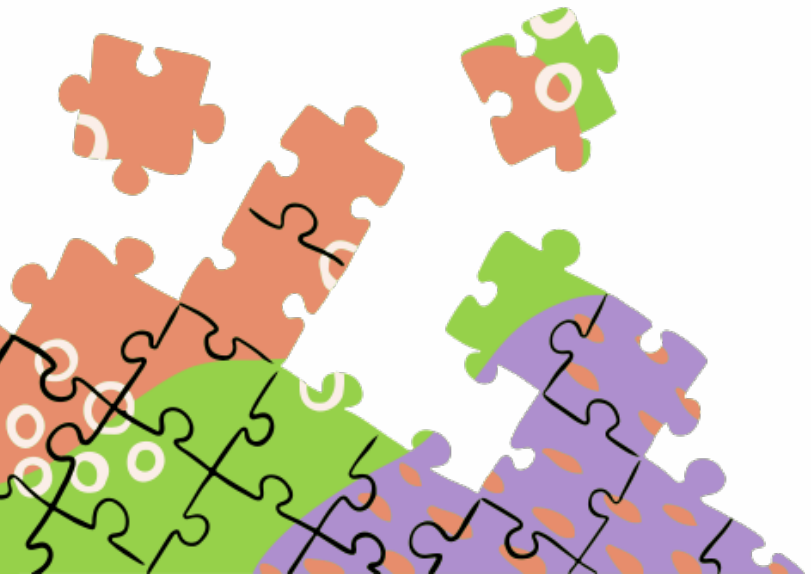
What's the book about?

Protagonist

Thing they must do

What is stopping them

What's at stake



What's the book about?

Protagonist

Protagonist

Thing they must do

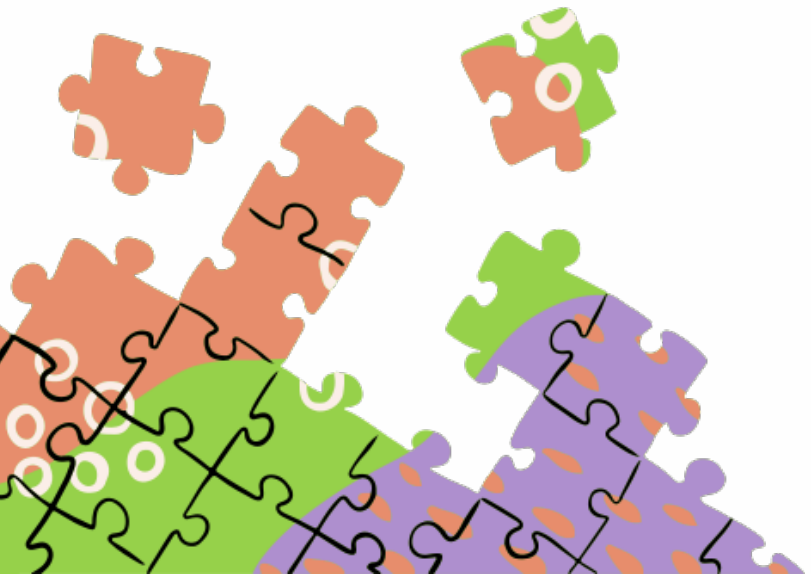
Goal

What is stopping them

Obstacle

What's at stake

Motivation



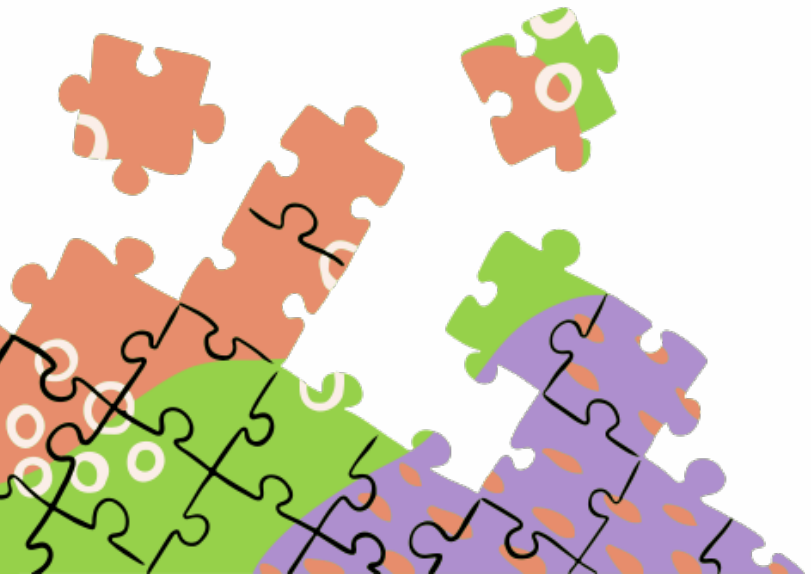
Logline or Hook (Premise)

It's about this (descriptor) (character)

Who has to (proactive goal)

With (antagonist) in the way

Or Else (the gut-punch consequence of failure)



Logline or Hook (Premise)

- This hook should be less than 50 words.
- Use strong and specific words that do double duty. (Student > Girl. Ex-marine > tough guy.)
- The image you create should reflect the setting, but if it's not obvious, state it up front. (It's an alternate Earth where...)

Logline or Hook (Premise)

- Practice until you can say it naturally.
- Use it in a social setting if someone asks what your book is about. (Bar Pitch” “Elevator Pitch”)
- Makes a good first line of your query letter.
- It opens your pitch meeting—grab their attention and then give more detail.
- If you have a good “Die Hard on a Bus” thing, pair it with this.

The Pitch

- 2-3 sentences that have all the impact of the hook, but give more of the story, the flavor, the setting, and the voice.
- The distilled essence of your book.
- Focus on the Main Character and what they want, need, and have at stake.
- Picture the whole route, not the turn-by-turn directions.
- If the logline is the movie trailer, this pitch is the book's back-cover copy.

In Case of a Quiz...

- What genre is the book? Where would it go in the bookstore? What would you compare it to?
- What's the theme?
- Is there an interesting setting or background?
- Do you have experience related to that setting?
- How is your book different from every other book out there?
- Also, name some books like it for comparison. 🤔

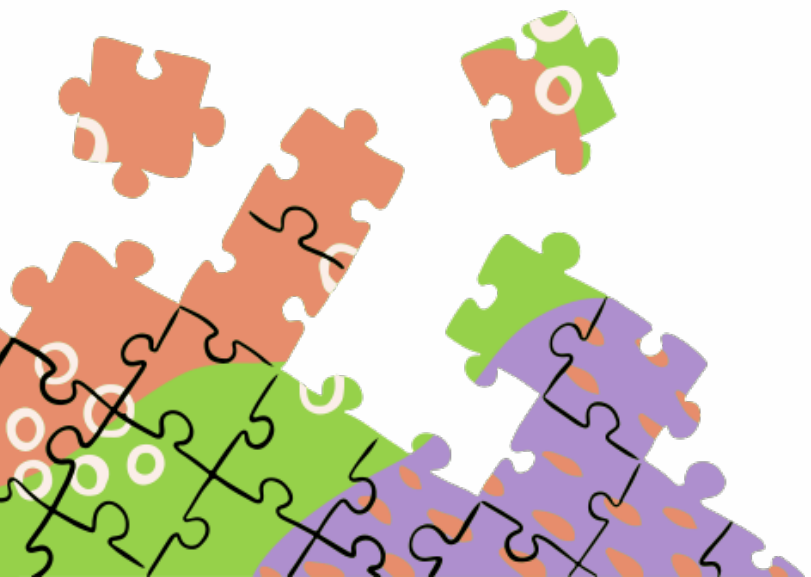
2-3 Sentence Pitch

It's about this (descriptor) (character)

Who has to (proactive goal)

With (antagonist) in the way

Or Else (the gut-punch consequence of failure)



Put another way...

The hero wants... (Motivation/Internal Conflict)

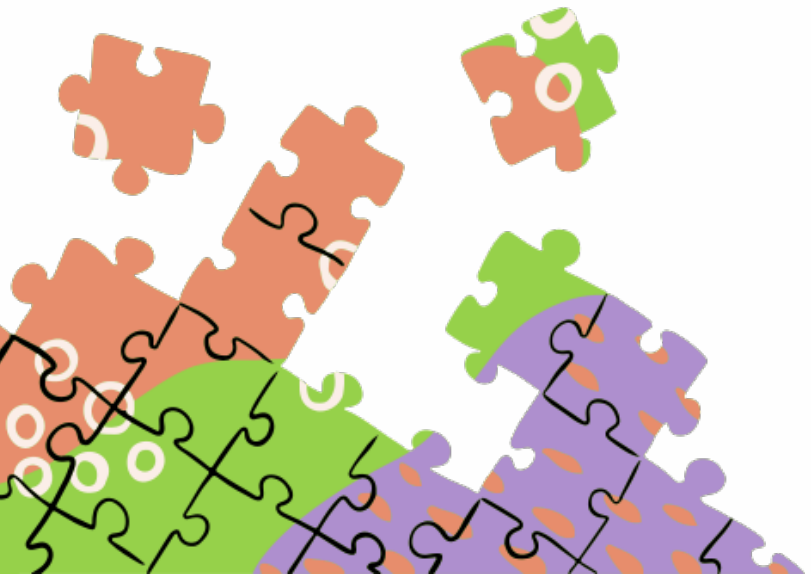
But finds herself... (External conflict)

At first she... (Inciting incident)

And she has to... (Goal)

Or else (consequences)

But in the end, she learns... (Character arc or theme.)



The Pitch

- Who are we going to root for?
- Who has the most at stake?
- What says “there’s a story here”?
- What mental images have you planted?
- What key words emphasize the mood and aesthetic?

The Essence of Your Story

“The protagonist is opposed by a villainous cabal that wants to control the world leaders from the shadows.”

Stop there! That is enough to entice the listener to imagine what kind of illuminati-esque skullduggery will ensue. Leave room for the listener to imagine it.

Include What Makes It That Story

- “Ex-con Danny Ocean recruits a team to pull off a seemingly impossible casino heist. He needs eleven shady characters and a foolproof plan.”
- Stop. “Eleven con-men plan a casino heist” is what makes it Ocean's Eleven. No other part of the plan is important to the whole.
- That opening leads to something about Danny's motivation (i.e., it's not about the money).
- Finally, you drop in the complicating element of his ex-girlfriend dating the casino owner. That's the final twist that says, *There's a story here. Don't you want to know how this unfolds?*

Keep it *Strong* and *Specific*

Compelling, relatable story elements....

- Take fewer words to get across than vague or generic ones.
- Can be boiled down to their essentials and still give a sense of the story.
- Are universal, relatable, and elemental.

Keep it Strong and Specific

Generic:

A farmboy finds out he's not who he thought he was and has to stop a great evil from taking over his home.

Specific:

Taran, assistant keeper of a soothsaying pig, faces the evil Arawn, who will to unleash an undead army on Pyrdain if Taran doesn't stop him.)

Checklist!

- Do the word choices create an impression or evoke a mental image?
- Do the characters have traits and drives that make them identifiable?
- Can you state the objective in one sentence? (Specific, strong, primal, relatable)
- Does the story problem (conflict) make you say "I wonder how *that* is going to work out?" Does it prompt you to imagine how it might unfold?
- Does the obstacle seem insurmountable? Or does it get a quick: "But why don't they just...?"
- Are the stakes vital? Are the consequences of failure a matter of life and death?

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