

How to Write a Pitch Paragraph

for a query letter, cover letter, or
the back cover copy for your novel

Chris Mandeville

Pitch Paragraph

- tells what your project is about
- written in third person, present tense
- similar to the copy you see on the back of a book

Pro Advice – Pitch Paragraph

- You don't have to summarize the whole novel in your pitch paragraph – that's pretty much impossible.

Kristin Nelson
Nelson Literary Agency

Pitch Paragraph Elements

- The Hook
- Plot Catalyst
- Protagonist's GMC
 - Goal
 - Motivation
 - Conflict
- What's at Stake
- Voice
- Genre Indicators

The Hook

A hook is a succinct statement that

- makes the book concept easy to grasp
- excites the reader to learn more about the project

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Plot Catalyst

According to Kristin Nelson,
a plot catalyst is:

“a main event that happens in the first 20-30 pages of your novel, and if that event doesn’t happen, your story can’t exist or go forward. You have to have that event to kick it off.”

“It’s not a theme, it’s not an emotion, and it’s not a character description. It has to be a physical event.”

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Protagonist's GMC

GMC:

Goal: What does your character want?

Motivation: Why do they want it?

Conflict: What's keeping them from getting it?

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What's at Stake

Stakes are
what happens
if the character fails

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Voice of Project
=
Voice of Pitch Paragraph

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Genre Indicator

Show
~ and ~
Tell
your genre

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Seeds Pitch Paragraph

Fifty years after a catastrophic solar event destroys all life and technology on the planet's surface, nineteen-year-old Reid Landers lives in the old NORAD facility deep inside Cheyenne Mountain with other descendants of Originals, barely subsisting on canned food and rats. For all they know they are the last hundred souls on Earth...until Reid meets the first stranger he has ever seen, a stranger with a grown apple. This catapults him on a journey to California to find seeds for his people, an adventure fraught with skin-carving pirates, twisted missionaries, and mercenaries on Rollerblades. Even if Reid can outwit the despot leader of "Lost" Angeles and resist the siren's song of a beautiful con artist, there may not be any seeds left to find. And his people—including the woman he secretly loves—might not take him back.

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Top Mistakes – Pitch Paragraph

- Too much info
- Unfocused
- Miscommunicating genre
- Generic descriptors
- Overkill on one element, like world-building or character description
- Too much jargon
- Convoluted plot that's too hard to follow
- No hook
- No plot catalyst
- Not showing a conflict
- Not showing what's at stake for protagonist
- Nothing original

Do Not Include The Ending



