

Prepping to Pitch at a Writers Conference

Call me crazy, but I love pitching a book idea to an editor.

No one else will sell my novel better than me. After all, I've lived with these imaginary people interrupting my thoughts for months. I'm invested time and mental energy in them. I've even talked about my hero and heroine with friends and family, well, as if they were my friends or family.

Do I get anxious when I think about sitting down in front of an editor, an unseen but oh-so-real clock ticking off precious minutes as I introduce myself and my novel? No. I'm not nervous, I'm *excited*. (Tell yourself that enough times and you start to believe it.) It helps that I've participated in 15-minute appointments from both sides of the table – as an editor hearing pitches and as a writer giving them.

I've also developed a few techniques – some my own, some from watching other writers – that make pitching a book easy, or at least *easier*.

1. **Travel light.** I've watched writers walk into 15-minute appointments juggling tote bags labeled with the conference logos, notebooks, purses, bottles of water, cell phones . . . you get the idea. The most important thing to bring to a 15-minute appointment is your idea. It's all about you,

the editor or agent, and selling your book. To help organize needed items like your pitch sheet, sample chapter and business card, check out my [Resource Page for Writers](#) on my website for details on a streamlined pitch notebook.

2. **Talk to yourself.** A 15-minute appointment is no time to ad-lib. Develop an elevator pitch – a brief one or two sentence verbal introduction to your book – and then practice, practice, practice so it comes off sounding unrehearsed. I’ve taught my family to ask, “So, what’s your book about?” I recite my pitch while I’m driving around town or cooking dinner or blow-drying my hair. Then, when I sit down in front of an editor or agent, I’m comfortable enough to let the conversation flow naturally.
3. **Take time to pray.** You’ve written your manuscript. You’ve rehearsed your elevator pitch so much your conference roommate insists you recited it in your sleep. All that’s left is to pitch it for real! *Stop.* Take your story – your hopes and dreams – and place them before God, asking him to bless the work of your hands. (Psalm 90:17)

Fifteen minutes is just that: 15 minutes. Don’t judge the success of a writing conference solely by your editor or agent appointments. Sure, we all want to hear the magic words “I’d like to see a full manuscript!” But you can’t make an editor say or do anything – all you can do is prepare, pray, and trust God for the outcome.