

Instructions

Welcome to Pitch!

Pitch is a journalism tool that helps reporters generate ideas for new stories. Different games and activities have been pulled from other disciplines to help you brainstorm in new ways. This deck can be played with 1 to many people. There are three card categories:

Games: Activities to facilitate idea generation

Prompts: Questions to kick-off brainstorming

Topics: Article topics that are consistently relevant

Start off with a **game card**, or jump in on your own with a **prompt** or **topic card**!

PITCH

Credits

This deck was created through a full iteration of the design process, incorporating feedback from industry professionals ranging from new reporters to editors. This deck address several pain points relating to idea generation that were discovered during user interviews.

Card content was pulled from various sources, adapting frameworks from other disciplines like UI/UX design and computer science. The political compass card was specifically adapted from IDEO's Design Kit.

All card content and design created by Zach Marino, using Figma and Adobe Illustrator.

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PITCH

An ideation card game

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Pair Programming

2

10-25+min

1. In a team of two, assign one person as the "driver" and the other as the "navigator". The driver has their computer open and the navigator is next to them.
2. Draw a **prompt card** and a **topic card**.
3. Spend 10 minutes looking into the **prompt** and **topic cards**, searching for potential ideas. The navigator talks through any ideas and the driver researches those ideas.
4. When the 10 minutes is up, reflect on any results and switch places. Stop when both teammates are satisfied.

GAME

Judges

3-6

10-20+min

1. Draw a **prompt card**. Whoever draws the card will be the first judge.
2. Everyone has 4 minutes to research and think about potential story ideas based on the **prompt card**. The judge is also allowed to think of potential story ideas.
3. When time is up, everyone presents their best idea.
4. The judge picks their favorite idea. The round ends and the winner becomes the new judge.
5. Repeat until satisfied and make sure to write down all ideas!

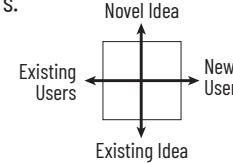
GAME

Political Compass

1+

10-20min

Note: This game is to be done after having some ideas written down

1. Create a 2x2 matrix on a large sheet of paper or online. The vertical axis represents how novel the idea is and the horizontal axis represents if it will cater to existing or new readers.

2. Write down all of your ideas on post-it notes and put them on the matrix based on the two criteria.
3. Take a look at where all the post-it notes are placed. Is there room for more novel ideas, or do we need some smaller but still progressive ideas to build off of?

GAME

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Rabbit Holes

3-6

10-20+min

1. Draw a **topic card**. Write the topic down at the top of your rabbit hole.
2. Spend 2 minutes brainstorming multiple broad story subjects that would fit with the topic. Write these story subjects under the topic and draw a line between the subject and the topic.
3. When time is up, spend 4 minutes thinking of specific ideas that fit under the broad subject you thought of above. Draw a line from every idea to the subject above.
4. When time is up, move to another branch and repeat step three.
5. Once at least two rounds have passed, the group can decide to stop and show the rabbit holes they made, showing off their favorite idea.

GAME

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Variety

What are some topics or story types you haven't written about recently?

Suggestions

Look through your recent articles and group them by type or subject on a piece of paper. Are there any trends in your recent works?

Pick a recent article and consider its subject. What are some other subjects that would be different from the recent article?

Example

If you wrote about a local digital content creator recently, what if you wrote about a local artist? If the creator was solo, what if you wrote about a group?

PROMPT

Fresh Perspective

Pick a **topic card**. What is a new spin you can put on that topic ?

Suggestions

Consider some common avenues to reporting on the chosen topic. Are there different perspectives or stakeholders that would provide for a more unique story? Could you explore this story in a different format than just text?

Example

If you pulled the sports topic card, what if you wrote about the statistics and technology behind many decisions made in Baseball?

PROMPT

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Big Picture

How does your assignment or beat connect to the larger news cycle?

Suggestions

Reflect on some of the stories you have read recently, what major topics or themes are dominating the current news cycle? Are there intersections between your assignment/beat and the current event?

If there is an intersection, how does the current event manifest in your area of focus?

Example

If you typically write about the arts and there is a lot of recent news chatter around climate change, could you explore how local artists are impacted or adapting to climate change?

PROMPT

Trending

What themes or patterns are emerging in recent stories?

Suggestions

Look through some recent articles written by outlets you follow or fellow writers. What are some of the common topics?

After you identify some trends, can you spot some under-reported angles around those trends? Do they point to any emerging topics that you could write about?

Example

If a lot of recent stories written by your colleagues are focusing on a big event in town, what if you wrote a profile on a specific person taking part in the event?

PROMPT

On the Beat

What stories are just outside the focus of your regular beat?

Suggestions

Identify the core requirements of your beat. Are there some story ideas that deserve a closer look but don't necessarily fall within the beat?

If there is a story that falls within your beat but does not fit within the regular format, could you spin it into a feature or profile?

Example

If your beat is entertainment, specifically TV, what if you wrote about a movie spin off for a TV show you have covered previously?

PROMPT

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Parts of a Whole

Pick **two or more topic cards**. What is a larger narrative you can craft from the cards you chose?

Suggestions

Is there any overlap between the topics? Maybe a shared theme or issue? Note down the similarities and differences and craft a larger narrative that includes the topic cards in some way.

Example

If you pick relationships and cooking as your topic cards, what if you wrote about local restaurants that are good for a first date?

PROMPT

Write what you Know

What is something you have always wanted to write about?

Suggestions

What is a topic you have always wanted to explore? This can be anything from your hobbies, experiences, areas of expertise, or general curiosity.

Example

If you are an avid fan of a niche board game from 10 years ago, what if you did a profile about it, documenting any interesting facts and oddities?

PROMPT

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Cooking

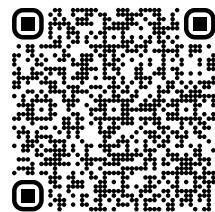
Cooking (and more broadly food) is a universal yet personal experience that most readers resonate with. Cooking is commonly associated with culture and creativity that can be brought to life through text.

Stories around cooking can be direct recipes, profiles about chefs, a look into a specific culture, or just a quick piece on a local restaurant.

Example

The Boston Globe

Folklore Provisions: A culinary love story in R.I.



TOPIC

Relationships

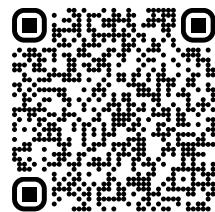
Relationships have been a staple in any storytelling medium since even before Shakespeare. Relationships have a profound effect on our lives and the stories that include relationships can often display the rawest form of human emotion.

Relationship stories can range from unique profiles (see the [cooking topic card](#)), relationship advice, or even just celebrity gossip.

Example

Boston.com

Love Letters - I wasn't ready to say 'I love you'



TOPIC

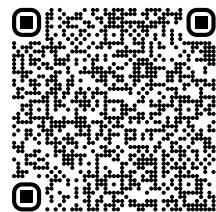
Sports

Sports can be an endless well of potential topics if you know where to look beyond the usual sports beat. Player profiles, inspiring stories, statistical quirks, and funny moments are just some of the potential stories that aren't exclusively about sports. There are hundreds of sports games every year and there is typically something interesting about each one that isn't obvious at first glance.

Example

The Athletic

Tarik Skubal is on the cusp of a Cy Young. His teammates know exactly how he got here



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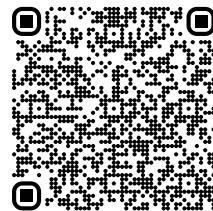
Famous People

Famous people hold a place in our collective consciousness for better or worse. Many stories about famous people focus on celebrity gossip and drama. However, despite this reputation, there is a strong demand for meaningful reporting about them. This could include profiles, Q&As, and coverage of new projects. Different mediums like video and audio should also be considered, as they have gained traction recently on platforms like YouTube.

Example

Vanity Fair

'Abbott Elementary' Changed Lisa Ann Walter's Life in More Ways Than One



TOPIC

Events

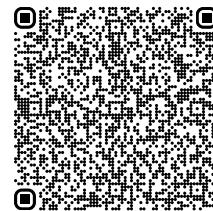
No matter what or where you are reporting from, there is always some kind of event happening that needs to be documented. Events can range from large-scale festivals and concerts, to impromptu look-alike contests where the prize is \$50 and a pack of cigarettes.

Reporting on events can include interviewing guests, talking to figures at the event, or even just documenting how to get tickets and prepare for the event.

Example

Chicago Sun-Times

Jeremy Allen White look-alike winner embracing the 'very odd, but exciting' contest experience



TOPIC

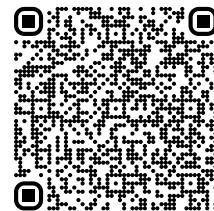
TV and Movies

TV and Movies serve as major cultural touchstones and are an artistic medium that people enjoy learning about. TV and Movie coverage is often limited to just reporting new releases and broken records, but there is an appetite for analysis and reviews of TV and Movies. People enjoy hearing about their favorite actors and directors, reading reviews of popular series, and learning about general trends in the industry.

Example

Vulture

The Penguin Became the Sofia Falcone Show: How Cristin Milioti crafted the most sympathetic psychopath on TV.



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Games

Games (both Digital and physical) are an untapped market of sorts for potential stories. In the journalism space, games function similarly to TV and Movies and art in general, but the people behind these games are much more anonymous and are rarely reported. There is a plethora of profiles and features that can be done on indie game developers, local board game makers, voice actors, animators, etc.

Example

Bloomberg

How Two Latvian Brothers Created a Hit, Mystery Video-Game Series



TOPIC

Internet Trends

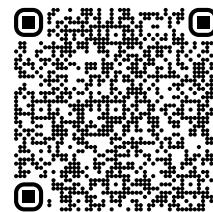
Chances are, most younger audiences probably do not need an Internet trend explained as they were there when it was made. However, for everyone else an article explaining an internet trend is appreciated.

To bring in that younger audience with this type of content, some good strategies would be to focus on the person behind an internet trend, document the trend's evolution, or note when the trend has broken into the mainstream.

Example

Vanity Fair

It's Domingo: How the Viral 'SNL' Character Took Over Your Feed



TOPIC

Curiosities

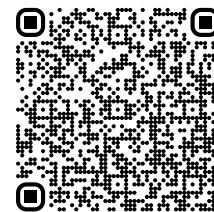
Curiosities are miscellaneous article topics that answer random yet intriguing questions readers never knew they had. The example below is investigating if you can literally do what a common saying claims you can do. This type of content is great for reader engagement and balancing out more depressing stretches of stories with something more fun.

This type of story mimics a popular type of YouTube video called video essays, where the creator investigates a seemingly random topic.

Example

Boston.com

Could you ever actually 'pahk yah cah in Hahvahd Yahd'?



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Product Reviews

Readers often look for guides and reviews to better understand their options when buying a specific type of product.

New products are always releasing, and readers will look for reviews to make an educated purchasing decision. Guides for ubiquitous products appeal to a wide audience and provide value to both the reader and the organization.

Example

**New York Times
Wirecutter**

*The Best USB-C Laptop
and Tablet Chargers*



TOPIC

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