

Members who have contributed to the below tips include: Kellie Bousfield, Bronwyn Carlson Catherine Hastings, Deborah Lupton, Robyn Moore, Brady Robards, Shanthi Robertson, David Rowe, Michael Walsh, Gavin Smith, Simon Copland & Andrea Waling.

Pitch

1. Read the TC's [Pitch guidelines](#);
2. Go through the [pitch to the editor](#) process before writing the piece to get feedback and make sure it is of interest to them – be really clear what the story is about. Try getting in touch with theme editor prior to pitching idea to sound out interest;
3. TC is looking for interesting (even a bit controversial) topics that appeal to the broader Australian public not just the academic community. Your pitch should be timely – new research, public interest story;
4. Co-author with someone who has already published in TC or ask them for feedback about your pitch/article. One member had the benefit of working their article through a special ecological pitch The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA) was doing, they received fabulous support from Sue there.;
5. Be a bit 'flexible' about what section you pitch to. One member had a pitch rejected in one section (Politics & Society) but accepted in another (Education). Another member had a piece on COVID-19 and arts workers rejected from the Health & Medicine section but got into Arts & Culture. Their friend's article on COVID-19 deaths and the federal v. state issues was rejected from Politics, but got into Health & Medicine. The pitch only allows you to nominate one section in the first instance. So mention its possible suitability in another section or sections, if appropriate, in one of the text boxes. Ensure your pitch is broadly in scope in terms of what content they usually publish and suggest how it fits if it's ambiguous;
6. Review other articles already published on TC that pertain to your idea or even that are tangential and make sure your idea is different and distinctive. The general sense is that TC will not green light an idea that they perceive covers ground they've already published so ensure you distinguish your idea;
7. Think about your prose when pitching the idea - keep your style simple, direct and clear. TC really like short sharp sentences.
8. Don't be discouraged/get angry if your idea is not commissioned. The general understanding is that sometimes different sections of TC will have an abundance of material. As a result they may find it difficult to accept new material at these points in time. At other times they may seek out content. In other words, they have busy and quiet times and sometimes your pitch might not make the cut because of other activities the editors are focused on. Don't be discouraged by this. When you have a good idea, pitch it, hope for the best and move on; and
9. As mentioned above, don't be disheartened if your initial pitch is rejected, sometimes you can find a new outlet. Get advice from your university's media office if you have one, or another fellow member who has published in other non-academic platforms (see the **Informed News & Analysis** section of our [weekly newsletter](#)). TC is now bombarded with pitches and is accepting proportionately fewer of them, so have several alternative outlets in mind.

Timing

1. It's all about timing: when an event occurs of significant public interest be extremely quick to pitch an expert analysis or when you're just starting an interesting new research project: what's the big take home point, why does it matter, what value can a public sociological analysis add, etc.?.;
2. Be prepared to write to a short deadline. If your piece is about a breaking story, they may want it within 24 hours. You usually get a few days for a piece about non-breaking news;
3. Try and time it right to fuse your expertise with current big issue and offer a new way of understanding it.

Content

1. Think about a big point that you want to make in the piece and build the story around that;
2. Try and connect it directly to your research and even better data that you have analysed;
3. Look for the newsworthy angle of your pitch, as TC is very interested in 'click-bait'. If you can comment on a breaking news item, drawing on your expertise, and do so quickly, this will be valued by TC. Alternatively, if you have just unearthed some interesting findings from a new research project, this could be a good chance to tell the world about them. TC prefers that there's at least a preprint available that you can link to in your TC piece so people can follow up (which means it's best if you have first prepared a journal article for submission and have made it OA on an OA repository before pitching). For example, one member who has had articles published around the broad purpose of education (that outside of economic return) - related this to student protests which were newsworthy at the time. They also had an article published about middle class parents engagement with schooling (their area of research) but built it around a scandal that was occurring in the US at the time about celebrities buying their way into college;
4. Use the site's search facility to see whether/how it has previously covered a topic. Briefly discuss and hyperlink to earlier articles if necessary;
5. If you want to address a primarily Indigenous topic and you are not Indigenous, you must have an Indigenous co-author: <https://theconversation.com/a-new-way-to-recognise-indigenous-knowledge-at-the-conversation-146477>

Statistics

1. Editors still tend to favour statistical data so if you are a qualitative researcher see if you can crunch some relevant Census data or draw on stats from secondary sources to complement your qualitative findings. One member commented about having good luck in the past teaming up with a quant/demography co-author to achieve this. Also consider teaming up to co-author with someone from outside the academy – e.g. a sector partner, policy person. Having data that can be presented in charts and graphs is often favoured;

2. Don't just add lots of stats though – link to other articles that have the information you want to include or to make the point. If you can, co-author with a PhD student to give them/their work some exposure also;

Writing Style

1. Think and write like a journalist not like an academic when structuring the piece. Check out the classic inverted pyramid newspaper article structure:<https://writingcooperative.com/how-to-structure-an-article-the-inverted-pyramid-8fa0c165fcae>;
2. Be prepared to write in an accessible way. TC platform has an accessibility check embedded, which is helpful. TC want the language to be appropriate for non-university-educated people but, don't allow editors to oversimplify what you are saying. Remember, nothing gets published until you sign off on the finished text;
3. Keep the writing light and invitational, to draw reader in;
4. Think carefully about the idea you want to convey and ensure it can be comprehended by a year 10 reader. Never hide behind jargon or verbosity, especially in your pitch! Focus on your reader. You want to pitch the idea for a general audience. This means an idea that can be understood more or less by a 16-year-old;
5. Keep it mostly jargon free and make it an easy read for people who may not be in your area of expertise;
6. Conceive of what the hook is for your idea - think about it in terms of how it might look as a newspaper article. This means translating the content from the world of academia into one that is as simple as you can express it. It is a process of reducing the complexity of the ideas and if you don't aim to do this yourself as an author, an editor is likely to either reject your idea or do this process of reduction much more clumsily than you might be comfortable with.

Structure

1. Look at the structure and content of other highly read TC articles in your area/by other sociologists to see how they are written – punchy title, key points up front, 'key messages', lots of links, pitched for 'lay educated' audience etc. For sociological pieces about everyday social/policy issues editors often like a brief a 'call to action' at the end e.g. what should the reader/policy makers do about this issue?;
2. Most TC articles are limited to 800 words, so make your points pithy. TC wants a fair amount of referencing (by hyperlink only), so be ready to embed relevant hyperlinks in support of your argument. This is a good chance to link to your own (relevant) work (preprint or published), but also that of others. Try to make sure most of the hyperlinks are to open access publications, however, as the vast proportion of your readership won't have access to journals or books;

Editorial Process

1. Don't be precious about things like headlines or structure of the piece as their editors make a lot of changes – it is not a journal article;
Be prepared for the editor you work with to heavily edit your article. They will usually choose the headline and images (unless you have some good ones you can supply) but, as mentioned above, be assertive if you feel at all uneasy about text changes, especially when they relate to your intended meaning;
2. Don't be overly precious with the editorial process. The process will likely take several iterations (especially if you are new to writing for the website), but the editors are usually always aiming to improve the way your ideas are presented. Be prepared for them to suggest substantive content additions. Push back when you feel as though the idea no longer speaks to your original idea, but also keep in mind the process is one of collaboration with the editors. If you are overly sensitive or naive to this fact, then you likely will be unhappy with the end result.

General

1. Follow and engage with TC editors and other journalists on Twitter if you use Twitter professionally;
2. Try to develop a relationship with an editor as their 'go to' person in your areas of strength.
3. In general, it helps to have a good social media profile for your research.

When you get an article published

1. If you find an error in the published article, get onto the editor straight away. They will fix it;
2. Email the details to [TASA Admin](#) so that we can share it with your fellow members via our newsletter and social media outlets;
3. Share the details with your media department so that they can promote it too.
4. Prepare for public reaction (good and bad) and remember that you cannot control their interpretation of your work.

Also, fellow member David Rowe wrote an article mainly about *The Conversation* a few years back that is available in full [here](#).

Thanks again to the members listed above for these great tips. Additional ones can be emailed to admin@tasa.org.au.

Why publish outside of journals?

1. Widespread engagement with your research;
2. Lead to further collaborations, funding, citations, and impact;
3. Lead to further media engagement (radio, TV, print);
4. Helps you think carefully about your message;
5. Discussion and dialogue fruitful for analysis and thinking; and
6. Great for Alt-Metrics (grant applications, promotion).