

PUBLIC SPECIFICATION

THE AAA PITCH STANDARD

VERSION 1.0 · TEN SECTIONS · FOUR SIDES · CITABLE BY NUMBER

This is a specification for what a competent music pitch contains — whether it lands with a press editor, a music supervisor, a radio presenter or a booker. It is not a guide and it does not teach you how to write one. It defines what a finished one must have, so that a pitch can be checked against it and **so that a rejection can carry a reason instead of nothing at all.**

It is free, public, and free to reproduce. Nobody has to subscribe to anything to use it.

WHY A NUMBERED STANDARD, AND NOT ANOTHER GUIDE

People who receive pitches don't explain rejections, because explaining costs time they don't have. Two hundred arrive, three get taken, and the rest get silence — not out of cruelty, but because writing "your subject line told me nothing" to a stranger takes ninety seconds and there are a hundred and ninety-seven of them.

So the sender learns nothing, sends the same pitch again next month, and the inbox gets worse for everyone.

A numbered standard makes a rejection citable. "Declined — §3.3" takes three seconds and tells the sender more than silence ever did. That is the entire purpose of this document. Everything else follows from it.

WHERE THE EXPERTISE SITS

Most of this standard is the same wherever you send it. Three sections are not: **§04 relevance, §05 assets and §06 timing** depend on who is reading — and each one is owned by somebody who works that inbox, not by us. Everything else is universal.

RATIFIED <u>Press</u> Editors, writers, freelancers, trade and consumer titles	PROVISIONAL · SEEKING <u>Sync</u> Music supervisors, sync agencies, ad and game music teams
PROVISIONAL · SEEKING <u>Radio & mixes</u> Presenters, producers, specialist shows, station music teams	PROVISIONAL · SEEKING <u>Booking</u> TV talent bookers, festival and club programmers

Each side also has its own page — [/press](#), [/sync](#), [/radio](#), [/booking](#) — carrying the universal clauses plus only that side's clauses. Send someone the page for their side and they read what applies to them and nothing else.

Three states, and we mean them literally. **RATIFIED** — somebody who works that side has read the clauses and signed them off. **IN REVIEW** — a named signatory has the clauses and has not finished with them. **PROVISIONAL** — we drafted it and nobody from that side has looked yet. We write a starting point rather than a blank, because it is easier to correct a proposal than to fill an empty box — but anything not marked ratified is a question, not an answer. [Tell us what's wrong with yours.](#)

§ 01 IDENTIFICATION ALL SIDES A recipient must be able to tell, in one glance, who is writing and on whose behalf. 1.1 The pitch states who is sending it and on whose behalf. If you represent the artist, say so. If you are the artist, say that.
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- 1.2 It is sent from an address a reply actually reaches — not a no-reply, not an alias nobody monitors.
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- 1.3 **One named recipient.** Not a group address, not a visible CC list, not a BCC blast dressed up as a personal email.
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- 1.4 The recipient's name is correct, and so is the outlet's, show's, agency's or production's. A merge-field error voids the pitch.
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§ 02

THE SUBJECT LINE **ALL SIDES**

The subject line is not a label. It is the only part of the pitch most recipients will ever read.

- 2.1 It states **the angle, not the artefact**. "Artist name — EP title" describes a file. It does not describe a reason to open it.
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- 2.2 It carries a type marker so it can be filtered. Press: [News] [Premiere] [Interview] [Feature] [Comment] [Review] · Sync: [Sync] [Brief response] [Catalog] · Radio: [Radio] [Mix] [Exclusive] [Session] · Booking: [Booking] [Availability] [Live]
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- 2.3 It is specific enough that the recipient could find it by search three weeks later.
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- 2.4 No block capitals, no fabricated "Re:", no "Following up" on a first contact, no urgency that isn't real.
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§ 03

THE FIRST FORTY WORDS **ALL SIDES**

Assume the recipient stops reading at word forty, because most of them do.

- 3.1 They establish three things: **what is being offered, why this recipient, and why now.**
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- 3.2 They do not open with a biography, a list of previous coverage, or a streaming figure.
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- 3.3 The pitch fails if its opening sentence would be equally true of two hundred other releases this month.
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- 3.4 "Why this recipient" means something specific they have published, played, placed or booked. Naming them is not the same as knowing them.
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§ 04

THE RELEVANCE TEST **BY SIDE**

Most pitches fail here, and no amount of formatting rescues one that does. The universal rule is the same everywhere; the question being answered is not.

- 4.1 **A pitch must answer the question the recipient is actually asking** — not the one the artist's team wishes they were asking.
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- 4.2 A release is not, by itself, a reason for anybody to act. Existing is not news, is not a sync, is not a booking.
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- 4.3 A pitch that fails its side's test below is not ready to send, however well written it is.
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SIDE

THE QUESTION YOU ARE ACTUALLY ANSWERING

Press **RATIFIED**

Is there a story? Something that changed, something at stake, or something nobody knew. Would this interest them if the artist were unknown and had nothing coming out?

Sync **PROVISIONAL**

Does this fit a brief they are actually working, and can it be cleared quickly? A great track that needs three months of rights chasing loses to a good one that clears today.

Radio & mixes **PROVISIONAL**

Is it playable on this show, is it new to their audience, and is what's being offered genuinely theirs first?

Booking **PROVISIONAL**

Will this draw the room or the audience, and can the act deliver it live on the night? Evidence beats assertion.

THE UNIVERSAL VERSION

Strip out the artist's name and the release. Is there still a reason for this specific person to act? If not, there is no pitch yet — there is only a date.

§ 05

ASSETS **BY SIDE**

Every reply a recipient has to send asking for something is a reason to choose somebody easier.

5.1 **Linked, never attached.** No attachment over 2 MB under any circumstances.

5.2 One link. No login wall, no account required, no expiry inside ninety days.

5.3 Files are named for the artist and the asset. Not `IMG_4021.jpg`. Credits travel with the file.

5.4 Anything factual in the pitch — a date, a credit, a claim, a clearance — is verifiable from the link without asking you.

5.5 The link contains the universal minimum below, plus everything listed for the side you are pitching.

All sides

Artist name as it should be written, release or availability date, full credits, one contact who can answer questions, and a private stream

Press **RATIFIED**

Press images at print and web resolution with photographer credit, a short bio and a long bio

Sync **PROVISIONAL**

A full lyric sheet wherever there is a vocal — including ad-libs, spoken word and anything sampled. Instrumental and, where they exist, stems. Written rights position — who controls master and publishing, whether it is one-stop, and who signs. Tempo, key and duration. A clean version if one exists

Radio & mixes **PROVISIONAL**

Broadcast-ready audio at the station's stated specification, a clean edit where the lyric requires one, stated duration, and for a mix a full tracklist with correct artist and label spellings

Booking **PROVISIONAL**

Live footage from an actual performance, not a promo. Routing and real availability windows. Technical requirements. Evidence of draw in that market rather than a global follower count

THE TEST

Could the recipient act on this — publish, place, play or book — without emailing you back for a single thing? If not, the pitch is incomplete, regardless of how good it is.

TIMING **BY SIDE**

These are minimum lead times, not targets. A great pitch that arrives late is a late pitch.

SIDE AND TYPE	MINIMUM LEAD TIME
Press — long-lead and print monthlies RATIFIED	8 weeks
Press — online features and interviews RATIFIED	3 weeks
Press — premieres RATIFIED	2 weeks before release date
Press — news RATIFIED	No less than 3 working days before it is public anywhere else
Press — seasonal and end-of-year RATIFIED	6 weeks before the list closes, not before it publishes
Sync — response to an open brief PROVISIONAL	By the stated deadline. There is no such thing as late but good
Sync — catalog introduction PROVISIONAL	No deadline, but never against a brief. Send it when you are not asking for anything
Radio — specialist show play PROVISIONAL	3 weeks before release date
Radio — exclusive or first play PROVISIONAL	4 weeks, and offered to one show at a time (\$07)
Radio — guest mix or session PROVISIONAL	6 weeks, longer if the show is pre-recorded
Booking — TV and broadcast performance PROVISIONAL	8 weeks
Booking — festival programming PROVISIONAL	4 to 9 months, depending on the size of the event

Booking — club and venue 10 weeks
dates **PROVISIONAL**

6.1 The relevant date — release, availability, or on-sale — and the embargo status appear in the first forty words or immediately beneath them.

6.2 A pitch sent inside the minimum lead time says so, and says why, rather than hoping nobody notices.

§ 07

EXCLUSIVITY AND EMBARGO **ALL SIDES**

Both words are routinely used to mean things they do not mean. Misusing them is the fastest way to lose a side permanently.

7.1 **An exclusive is offered to one recipient at a time.** Offering the same "exclusive" to twelve is not a strategy, it is a lie that takes one message between them to expose.

7.2 Every offer of exclusivity carries a stated reply-by date, so the recipient knows how long they are holding it.

7.3 If it has been offered elsewhere and declined or lapsed, say so when you offer it next.

7.4 **An embargo is a request, not an instruction.** It is not in force until the recipient has agreed to it.

7.5 An embargo has a date **and a time zone**.

7.6 "First play", "first look" and "premiere" are exclusives and are governed by every clause above.

FOLLOW-UP ALL SIDES

The clause most often broken, and the one recipients care most about.

- 8.1 **Once.** Not twice, not weekly, not "just floating this back to the top."
- 8.2 After five working days at the earliest, in the original thread, so the recipient has the context.
- 8.3 It adds something — a new asset, a confirmed date, a development. A follow-up that adds nothing is a second copy of a pitch already declined.
- 8.4 Not by phone, social message, or in person at an event, unless you were invited to.
- 8.5 **Silence is a no.** A sender who has met this standard is entitled to treat non-reply as a decline, close the loop, and move on without resentment.

PROHIBITED ALL SIDES

A pitch breaching any clause in this section does not meet the standard, whatever else it gets right.

- 9.1 Contact details obtained from a purchased, scraped, or resold list.
 - 9.2 Undisclosed tracking pixels or read receipts.
 - 9.3 **Any payment, gift, or consideration offered in exchange for coverage, placement, play or a booking,** in any form, however it is described. Where the recipient is a licensed broadcaster this is not only against this standard — it is regulated, and it is their license at risk, not yours.
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- 9.4 Sending to a personal address that was not published for professional contact.
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- 9.5 Re-sending a declined pitch to the same person under a new subject line.
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- 9.6 Naming an outlet, show, brand or venue as interested, or a person as attached, without their agreement.
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- 9.7 Offering rights you do not control, or describing a track as cleared when the clearance has not been confirmed in writing.
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- 9.8 **Offering anything you have not already secured.** Guest list, tickets, a set time, an interview, a studio visit, a premiere, availability, a hold, an exclusive. An offer in a pitch is a commitment from the moment it is read, and the recipient will plan around it. If it is not agreed with whoever controls it, it is not yours to offer.
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- 9.9 **Withdrawing an offer after it has been acted on.** Where an offer helped secure the coverage, the play or the booking, failing to honor it is the most expensive breach in this document — and being slow, vague or unreachable about it counts as failing to honor it. If something genuinely falls through, say so immediately, in one sentence, without being chased.

THE TEST

Everything you offered — could you deliver all of it, today, if every recipient said yes at once? If not, you are not pitching, you are gambling with somebody else's page.

An offer costs nothing to make and everything to break.

FOR ANYONE WHO RECEIVES PITCHES — HOW TO USE THIS

Link it wherever you tell people how to reach you. Submission guidelines, a show's contact page, an agency's site, the line in your bio. "Pitches should meet the AAA Pitch Standard" replaces a page of rules you'd otherwise write and maintain yourself.

Then decline with a citation. Three characters instead of a paragraph, and the sender learns something instead of nothing:

Not for us – §3.3

Can't use this – §5.5, and the lead time is short (§6)

You are not obliged to explain further, and nobody using this standard should expect you to. The point is that a citation costs you seconds and saves you the same pitch arriving again next month.

If your side's clauses are wrong, tell us and we'll change them. They are drafts until somebody who does your job has signed them off. That is the whole invitation.

Nothing here asks you for anything else. AAA does not publish your contact details, does not sell access to you, and does not need you to subscribe to anything.

10.1 A sender may add one line to the foot of a pitch: Sent to the AAA Pitch Standard v1.0 — aaabrief.com/standard

10.2 Declaring compliance falsely is worse than not declaring it. It is checkable, and it will be checked.

VERSION 1.0 — SIGNATORIES

This standard is written and ratified by the people who receive the pitches. **A side is only ratified once somebody who works it has signed its clauses**, and no name appears here until that person has agreed to it in writing. It is revised at most once a year, with a published changelog, so that a pitch written to v1.0 does not silently stop complying.

THE CORE — §01-03, §07-10

Sara Cooper

Access All Areas · 25 years in North American music press

PRESS — §04, §05, §06 PRESS CLAUSES

Scott Lombardo

Editor, EDMTunes

RATIFIED

Sara Cooper

Access All Areas · Sara Cooper PR

The press clauses are signed by an editor who runs an inbox, which is the only signature that makes a side ratified. **§9.8 and §9.9 exist because Scott Lombardo proposed them** — the first clauses in this document contributed by somebody outside it.

SYNC · RADIO & MIXES · BOOKING — SEEKING SIGNATORIES

The clauses for these three were drafted by a press publicist and **nobody who works them has signed off yet**. That is why they are marked provisional, and it is a genuine invitation rather than a formality — the first person from each side to tell us what we got wrong becomes its signatory. Tell us what's wrong with yours.

SHARING THIS – THE LINK IS THE DOCUMENT

Send the link, not a file. §5.1 of this standard says linked, never attached, and a standard that arrives as an email attachment has argued against itself before anyone reads it.

<https://aaabrief.com/standard>

That URL is the canonical version and it always resolves to the current one. No login, no expiry, no wall — §5.2, applied to itself.

A PDF of v1.0 exists for printing and for marking up, and it's what to attach to your own submission guidelines if you host them as a document. It is a snapshot: if v1.1 ships, the PDF is stale and the link is not.

License. Reproduce this in full, unmodified, with attribution to Access All Areas and a link to aaabrief.com/standard. Quote from it freely. Do not publish a modified version under this name — a standard that means different things in different places is not a standard.

What this is not. It defines what a compliant pitch *contains*. It does not teach you how to find the story, write the bio, or build the campaign that gets you there. That's a craft, and it's what The Pitch System and the monthly brief are for.

Corrections and proposals for v1.1 — hello@saracooperpr.com. Proposals from people who work the side in question take precedence over everyone else's, including ours.

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