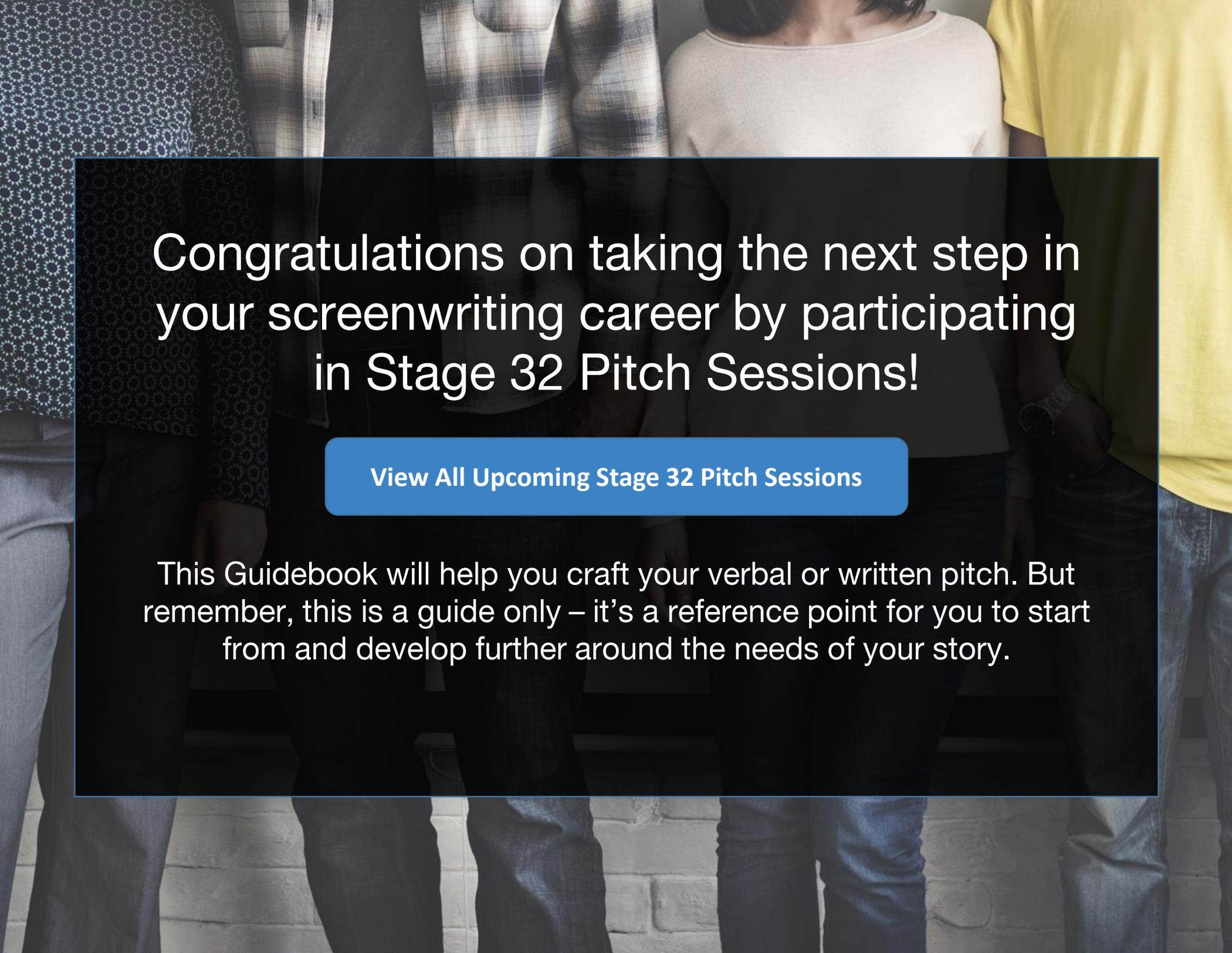




# STAGE

# 32

## Pitching Guidebook

A group of people standing together, with a dark overlay containing text. The background shows the lower halves of several people in various clothing, including a patterned top, plaid shirts, a white top, and a yellow shirt. The text is centered on a dark rectangular background.

**Congratulations on taking the next step in your screenwriting career by participating in Stage 32 Pitch Sessions!**

[\*\*View All Upcoming Stage 32 Pitch Sessions\*\*](#)

This Guidebook will help you craft your verbal or written pitch. But remember, this is a guide only – it's a reference point for you to start from and develop further around the needs of your story.

Stage 32 offers a unique way to pitch your script directly to executives throughout the industry who would otherwise not accept unsolicited material.

You will pitch directly to the executive **Verbally** over Skype or by Phone, or with a **Written Pitch**, and received feedback directly from the exec!

**Verbal pitches:** Verbal pitches are completed face-to-face over Skype, or via telephone (US phone numbers only) based on your preference and availability. You will have approximately 8 minutes to pitch your material. We recommend keeping your pitch to 4-6 minutes to allow room for questions.

**Written pitches:** Stage 32 written pitches are 2 pages max and must be submitted in DOC(X) or PDF format ONLY. You will upload your written pitch directly on your order confirmation page. We recommend using PDF to ensure the pitch the exec reads looks exactly like the one you sent.



# INTRODUCTION

Most pitches will begin with a short introduction that details your personal connection to the story or brings authenticity to your projects.

If you're a physician pitching a medical show, bring this up in your pitch. If your story is based on true events or known IP, make sure the exec knows.



# A NOTE ON AWARDS

We recommend against mentioning awards your script has won unless they are extremely prestigious: *e.g.*, **Nicholl Fellowship, Page, Austin, Final Draft, etc.**

If you choose to mention awards, keep them brief.



# THE SPECS

Your specifications, or “specs”, are the most basic pieces of information for your script.

They usually include things like **format**, **genre**, **tone**, **rating**, **comps**, *etc.*



**Format:** Is your script a feature, half-hour comedy, hour-long drama, for digital formats, *etc.*?

**Genre/Tone:** You may wish to include the main genre, sub-genre, and tone of your script. This may include using a network or studio to describe your script (*e.g.*, an FX-style comedy, or Pixar-style Animated Project).

**Nutshell/Comps:** You may wish to compare your scripts to similar features or TV shows, as in “It’s SICARIO meets MAD MAX.” Use successful, modern comps that are tonally similar to your films, not merely similar in plot. Your comps should also be the same format as your script (feature comps for a feature scripts, half-hour TV for a half-hour TV script, *etc.*)

**Rating:** Don’t leave the exec guessing if your project is a feature or TV series, a comedy or drama, or if it will earn an R or PG rating. Though not always necessary, it is okay to state the specs openly to help contextualize the story you are about to describe.





# A NOTE ON NUTSHELLS

Nutshells are a contentious topic among execs. Some hate them, some can't live without them. Don't go into unnecessary detail. Hit the comps and keep moving!

# THE LOGLINE

A good log line will help convey your story in a succinct and compelling manner. Once the exec understand the concept of the film, they can enjoy the storytelling of your pitch, rather than spend it trying to understand the core of your script.

A successful logline will **identify the protagonist and their goals**, and **set up the story**.

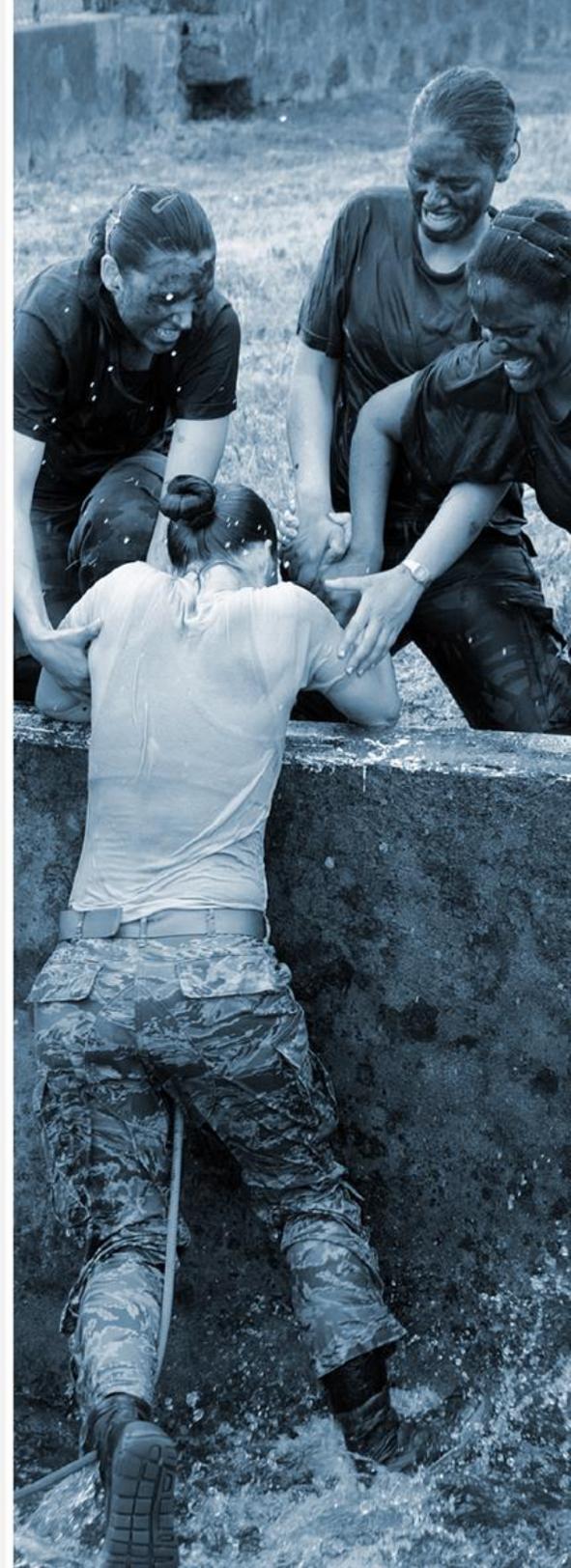


**Identify the protagonist and their goals:** most loglines will identify the protagonist by what they do, but your description must be relevant to the story.

The protagonist's goals should be described by actions and must be something that can be ongoing and sustained. Avoid goals that can be quickly achieved.

**Set up the Story:** you should describe the inciting incident that launches the protagonist into the plot against the antagonist. Do not attempt to summarize the entire plot.

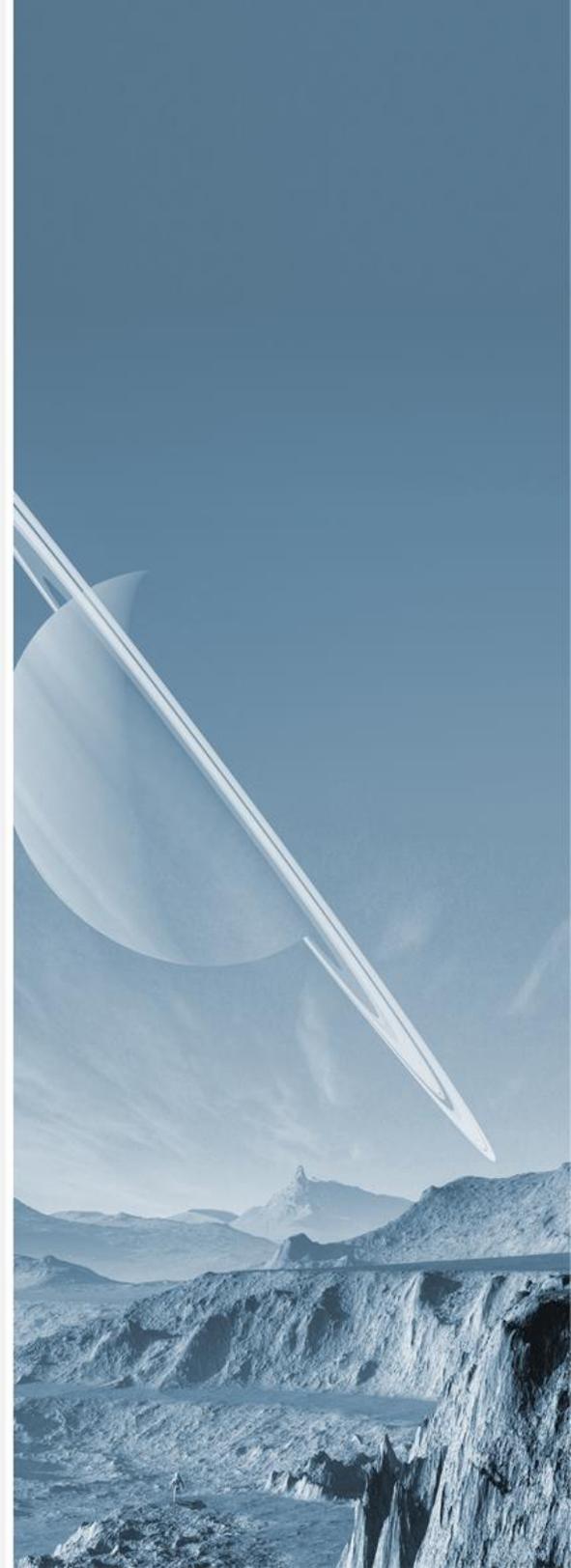
Get Your Logline Crafted by Emmy  
Award-winner Lane Shefter Bishop



# UNIQUE WORLD/RULES

If your story is set in a unique world or one with unique rules, you should establish these before you dive into your story.

This is especially important for stories with heavy world-building (*e.g.*, LORD OF THE RINGS, STAR WARS, “Game of Thrones”), or magic/science-fiction elements.



# INTRODUCING CHARACTERS

The most important part of your pitch is likely to be establishing your main character (and key supporting characters) and why we care about them. Do not assume the exec will have a natural affinity to your protagonist - you must give them a reason to be interested in your protagonist so they care what happens to them.

An easy way to introduce characters is to identify two significant traits - one positive and one negative (*e.g.*, a genius, narcissist).



**Supporting Characters** should be introduced in a manner that relates them to your main character. This makes the characters and story much easier to track. For some characters, you may want to use this relationship, rather than their name, to make your story flow efficiently (*e.g.*, the protagonist's wife).



## A NOTE ON CHARACTER INTROS

You may decide to present your characters before launching into the story, or introduce them as they appear in your plot.

# THE STORY

You should tell your story arcs in full, but avoid attempting to fit in every detail. It is often easiest to convey your plot by internally organizing it into act breaks. The first act (set-up) and last act (climax/resolution) are most important. Despite taking up less time in your script than the second act, these acts will need to be pitched in more detail.

The second act should be broken into major beats and arcs, with major set piece and character moments highlighted. These are what the exec will remember anyway!



**Give away the ending:** We recommend you give away your ending as this informs the exec if there is a satisfying climax and resolution to your story. If your story contains a twist, give this away as well - it is what makes your story unique and interesting.

**Tell them what they need to know:** You should tell the exec everything they need to know to understand the characters and plot, and nothing more. If it isn't related to a plot or character arc, it doesn't belong in your pitch (or you script for that matter).

**Stay focused on character:** Remember to keep your storytelling focused on the characters. The longer the pitch, the greater the danger that it falls into a recitation of plot mechanics.

**Remember your genre:** Your pitch should reflect and consider your genre. If you are pitching a thriller, you must be sure that the twist and turns are easy to follow and understand. If you are pitching a horror script, it needs to be scary. Comedy, funny. *Etc.*



# THE SERIES

If pitching a TV show/digital series, you've just finished summarizing your pilot episode. You will now want to give an overview of your series.

Where does the story go from here? What is the first season arc? What does season 2 look like? Season 5? How do the characters grow and change over the seasons?

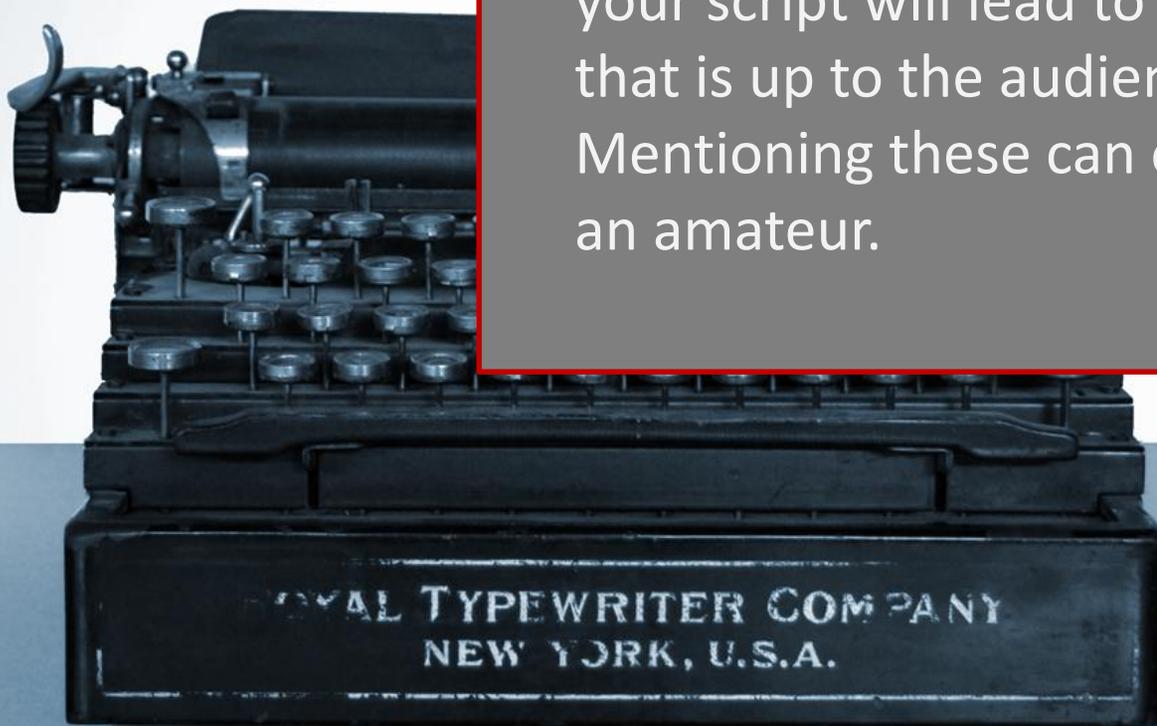
The exec will want to know you've thought about the series, not just the pilot. You must demonstrate a story engine that will make the show last 5+ seasons.



# A NOTE ON SEQUELS/ FRANCHISES

We recommend against including information on potential sequels or franchises - you may believe your script will lead to a 6 movie franchise, but that is up to the audience to determine.

Mentioning these can often make you come off as an amateur.



# ADDITIONAL NOTES

**Pitching is a first impression.** You aren't just pitching your project, but yourself as well. Features and pilots can take years to get made – that's years of working together with an executive. You have to make yourself known as someone the executives want and are excited to work with. A good attitude goes a long way and this is a business of relationships, so make your first impression count!

**If you're submitting a written pitch, remember that this is, for all intents and purposes, a writing sample.** If your pitch is poorly written and riddled with grammatical, spelling and contextual errors the executive will have no reason to believe you can properly execute a screenplay.

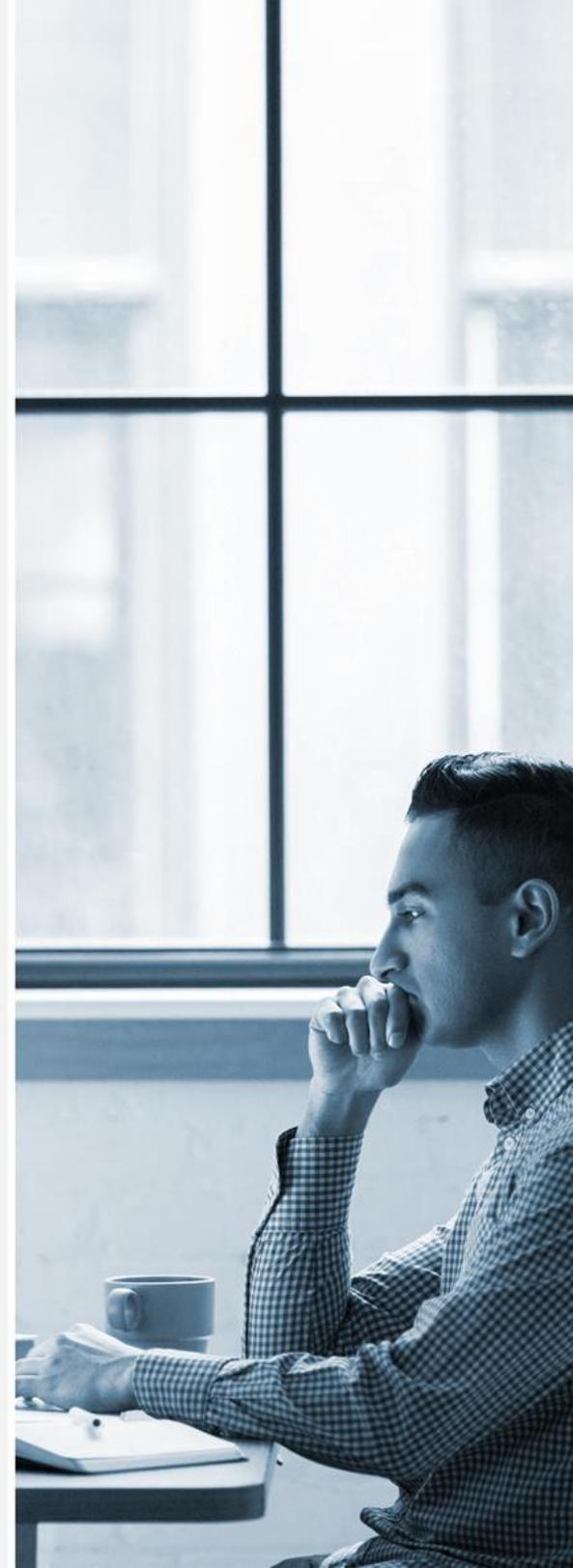
**A written pitch should be easy to read.** Use fonts, bolding, italics, underlines, and spacing to your advantage to make sure your pitch is easy to read. An executive will NOT want to open your pitch document and see a giant, unformatted wall of text. Do not use Courier font in your pitch document. It's great for screenplays, but terrible for pitch documents.

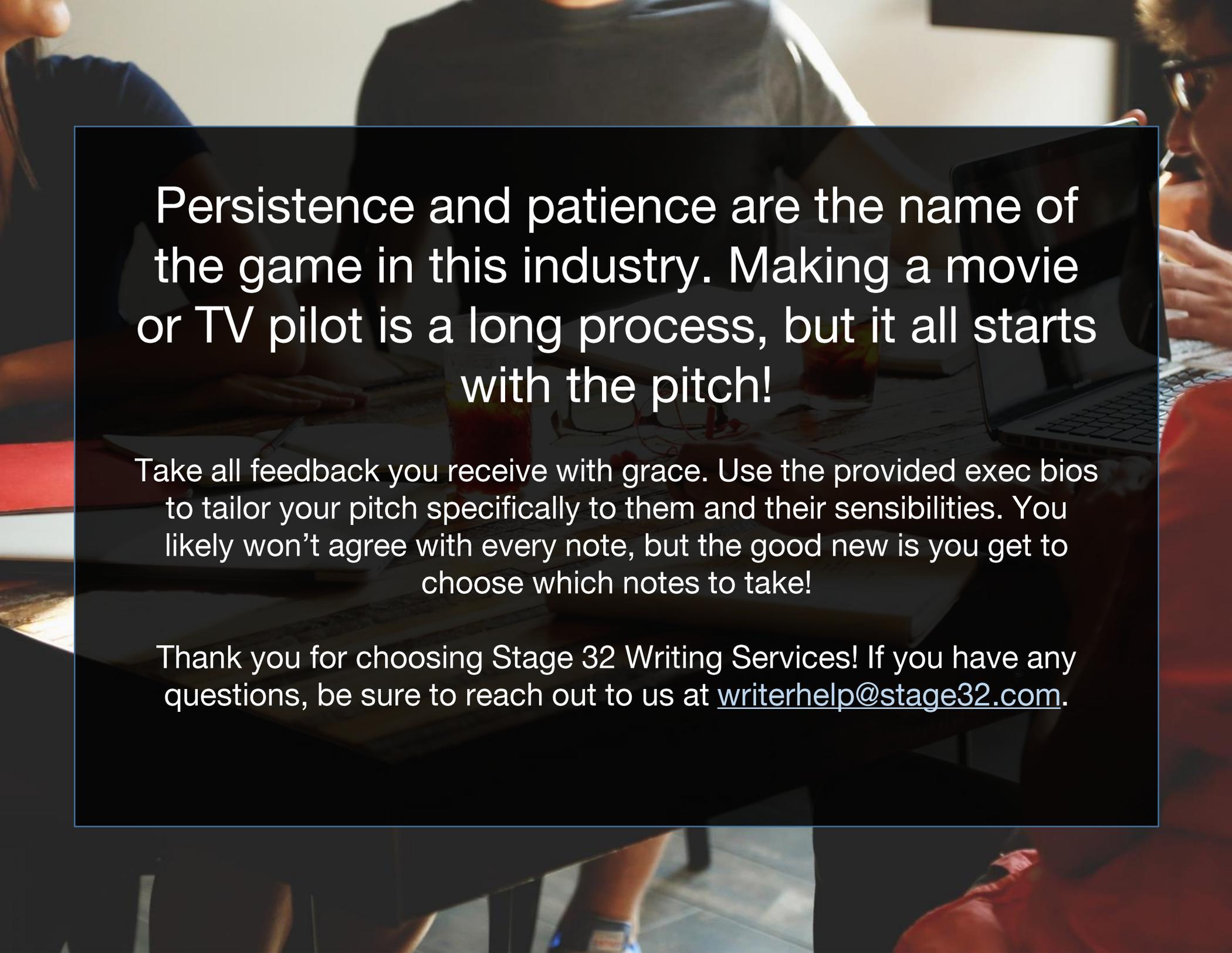


**Do not overly manipulate margins or font size to fit more content.** An executive will NOT want to read two pages of 10 point font. They will know immediately why you chose that small size and it will serve as an example of you trying to circumvent the rules they very well know you're supposed to follow. Written pitches are first impression too!

**If you're pitching verbally, keep your pitch conversational.** Try not to read off notecards, and try not to sound too rehearsed. An executive doesn't want to be talked at - pitch as though this were something that happened to you over the weekend, and you're simply relaying that Story.

**It can be tempting to use the entire allotted 8 minutes to pitch your story.** DON'T! Alter your pitch however is necessary to fit it into 4-6 minutes. The extra two minutes to allow an executive ask any questions they might have is INVALUABLE. Sometimes, a correctly answered question can mean the difference between a PASS and REQUEST.



A group of people are gathered around a table in what appears to be a meeting or collaborative workspace. A laptop is open on the table, and there are papers and a glass of water. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm glow from a lamp in the background. The text is overlaid on this scene.

Persistence and patience are the name of the game in this industry. Making a movie or TV pilot is a long process, but it all starts with the pitch!

Take all feedback you receive with grace. Use the provided exec bios to tailor your pitch specifically to them and their sensibilities. You likely won't agree with every note, but the good news is you get to choose which notes to take!

Thank you for choosing Stage 32 Writing Services! If you have any questions, be sure to reach out to us at [writerhelp@stage32.com](mailto:writerhelp@stage32.com).