



CISION®

2020 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

# PITCHING KIT



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**I think traditional holiday pitches will still work, but anything with an angle that mentions the ‘new normal’ might go to the top of the potential coverage list this year!**

**– Rick Limpert, Freelance Writer and Contributor, *Yahoo News*, *GAFollowers***

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We spoke with six journalists and influencers, who are responsible for their publication’s gift guides, to get pitching best practices that’ll get you on the nice list.

And since everything is different this year, we also made sure to ask how COVID-19 is affecting pitching in this unique case. Holiday Gift Guides drive a ton of traffic as shoppers search for the perfect gifts every year; they’re one thing that still gets read and shared, especially as guide authors build rapport with their audiences over time.

Want more resources on pitching? You can find tailored guides and more on our [Resources page](#).





## Alysa Jung

Senior Editor, Hearst Lifestyle Group  
Contributing Writer, *Reader's Digest Digital*, *Chowhound*

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Alyssa Jung is a senior editor at Hearst Lifestyle Group, Health Newsroom and edits and reports health content across the Hearst Lifestyle Brands—*Prevention*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Woman's Day*. She also oversees all Holiday Gift Guide submissions and covers food, nutrition, home, lifestyle/general wellness, and family topics. She is also a Contributing Writer for *Reader's Digest Online* & for *Chowhound*. She has previously worked as a research editor at *Reader's Digest* and a blogger at *HuffPost*. Read on to hear her thoughts on pitching during the holiday season.

### How do you like to receive press releases?

Via email.

### Do you have any advice for PR pros trying to pitch you?

Please do follow up if you don't hear from me but not before 48 hours have passed. Please just send the pitch and relevant info without asking what I'm looking for.

### Do you have any pet peeves when working with PR professionals?

Please don't follow up before 48 hours have passed.

### How has COVID-19 changed your coverage on Holiday Gift Guide items and what kind of pitches would you like to receive?

I'm still looking for all the usual things— anything related to health and wellness, lifestyle, food, fitness, family, home.

### What is the most helpful thing PR pros can do for journalists prepping Holiday Gift Guide pages in these challenging times?

Send all the relevant details, pricing info, and sample availability up front.



## Marika Flatt

Travel Editor/Associate Editor, *Texas Lifestyle Magazine*  
Host, Weekend Trip Tips on *Texas Standard*

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Marika Flatt is the travel editor for *Texas Lifestyle Magazine* and handles the outlet's Holiday Gift Guide submissions. She launched her magazine writing career in 2002, combining her love of travel, journalism, media and public relations. Marika has been travel writing non-stop since then and feels that part of her success in delivering an enticing travel feature is because her "day job" is running a literary PR agency, PR by the Book. She shares tips on how to pitch her during the holiday gift guide season.

### How do you like to receive press releases?

Email.

### Do you have any advice for PR pros trying to pitch you?

It's best to keep the pitch to a few paragraphs. I like to also have: a website, price point, a link to Dropbox with high res images, along with a short description.

### Do you have any pet peeves when working with PR professionals?

No need to follow up to a blast email you send me. I read every single email (I know, I'm a rare animal!) so if I don't respond, it means I can't use it.

### How has COVID-19 changed your coverage on Holiday Gift Guide items and what kind of pitches would you like to receive?

The only change is that we're really trying to support small businesses and Texas-based businesses more than ever to help them out (vs. mass corporations).

### What is the most helpful thing PR pros can do for journalists prepping Holiday Gift Guide pages in these challenging times?

We write from a first-person perspective, so oftentimes, we need to sample the product for ourselves so we can recommend it. It's helpful if you can note in the original pitch if samples are available.

## Rick Limpert

Freelance Writer, Contributing Writer, *Yahoo News*, *CAFollowers*

Contributor, *NBC 11 Alive Sports Extra* in Atlanta, *CBS 46* in Atlanta, *WMAZ CBS 13* in Macon, GA, and *FOX News National*

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Rick Limpert is an Atlanta-based freelance writer that covers events, sports, technology, holiday gifts and products on a regional and national basis. He regularly contributes to *Yahoo News* and *CAFollowers*, as well as Rick's "Wireless Wednesday" tech segment on *SportsRadio 92.9 The Game*. He also does TV tech segments for *NBC 11 Alive Sports Extra* in Atlanta, *CBS 46* in Atlanta, *WMAZ CBS 13* in Macon, GA, and *FOX News National*. Limpert co-authored the best-selling tennis book, *The Invaluable Experience* with pro tennis player, Danielle Lao. He shares advice to PR professionals trying to pitch for the holiday season.

### How do you like to receive press releases?

Email is always the best—pasted into the email body and an attachment.

### Do you have any advice for PR pros trying to pitch you?

Love when the pitch is topical to me. Sports, sports tech, consumer gadgets and travel. Keep crowdfunding campaign pitches to a minimum, and/or pair with something else to get my attention. High res images and/or possibility of a review sample are always good for content for my radio and TV segments.

### Do you have any pet peeves when working with PR professionals?

Nothing too big. For the most part, I respect the job they do, but don't "at" me to try and change an article or segment after it ran because of an error they made. That is really hard for me to do.

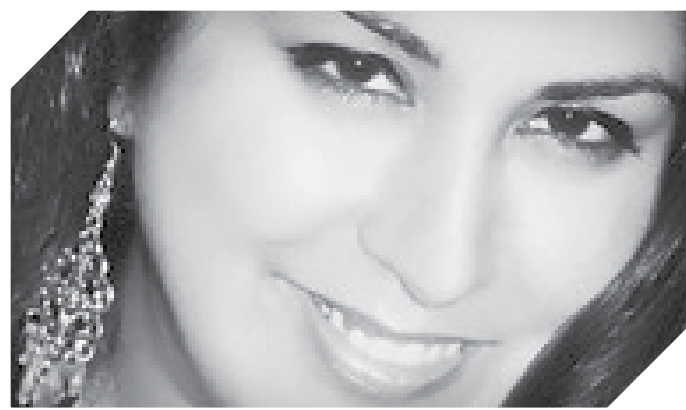
### How has COVID-19 changed your coverage on Holiday Gift Guide items and what kind of pitches would you like to receive?

I don't know if it has changed much, other than offering an entirely new segment to cover. Social distancing and making sure to keep a distance— or even face masks— get tremendous hits and interest when paired with the right gadgets or tech! New possibilities for coverage and angles excite me.

### What is the most helpful thing PR pros can do for journalists prepping Holiday Gift Guide pages in these challenging times?

Just keep doing what you are doing and get pitches out early and give me lead time. I think traditional holiday pitches will still work, but anything with an angle that mentions the "new normal" might go to the top of the potential coverage list this year!





## Rachel Kapur

Editor, *Urban Milan*

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Rachel Kapur is the editor at *Urban Milan* and covers dining, local entertainment, lifestyle, fashion, movies, beauty, technology and travel aimed at men and women in major cities across the United States. She handles the outlet's Holiday Gift Guide, for which submissions are due November 1st. Prior to launching *Urban Milan*, Kapur worked for Goldman Sachs. Here are her thoughts on pitching the gift-giving season, especially in the middle of a pandemic.

### How do you like to receive press releases?

We prefer to receive press materials emailed to us or as part of a PR Mailer. We prefer pitches to be sent to [info@urbanmilan.com](mailto:info@urbanmilan.com)

### Do you have any advice for PR pros trying to pitch you?

Please be clear and concise about what you are pitching in the beginning of your email; we often receive emails that take a couple of paragraphs to introduce their item. We appreciate photos and links to the actual products being pitched as well. Please also indicate if you have samples available to send as we personally use and review each item in our gift guides.

### Do you have any pet peeves when working with PR professionals?

We are happy to hear from PR companies that are pitching relevant stories or products. Our only pet peeve is receiving emails that set publication deadlines without prior communication or commitment from us. We specifically write about products/services that we have personally reviewed unless it's a sponsored post.

### How has COVID-19 changed your coverage on Holiday Gift Guide items and what kind of pitches would you like to receive?

COVID-19 has changed everything; we normally would be attending holiday events right now to learn about new products and holiday trends. We would love to receive pitches on items that are available online and would like to receive samples as soon as possible, as we normally review/feature 200-300 items every year. We are interested in personalized/customized gifts, STEM learning products, tech gifts, organic skincare, edible gifts and more.

### What is the most helpful thing PR pros can do for journalists prepping Holiday Gift Guide pages in these challenging times?

They can start pitching for the holidays now and sending items as soon as possible. Since there are no events this year, we cannot get samples at the events, so it takes time to coordinate samples and review them for our publication.



## Alison Blackman Dunham

Publisher & Editor, *Advice Sisters*

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Alison Blackman Dunham is the publisher and editor-in-chief for *Advice Sisters*. She covers beauty, grooming, book reviews, fashion, relationships, travel, alcohol and spirits, entertainment, lifestyle, technology, and luxury goods – and oversees the Holiday Gift Guide with a submission deadline of October 15th. She launched *Advice Sisters* in 1997 along with her twin sister Jessica Freedman. Read on for her thoughts on all things holiday gift-giving.

### How do you like to receive press releases?

Generally, by email is best, but text is ok. I do not like to answer the phone unless I really have to.

### Do you have any advice for PR pros trying to pitch you?

Absolutely! Make the first pitch simple and to the point. Keep attachments to a minimum and make sure that the subject line says what you're pitching not "quick question" or another clickbait title.

### Do you have any pet peeves when working with PR professionals?

Yes, I'm called "Chloe" A LOT. My name is Alison Blackman. I'm not a man either. Also, a lot of people are sending blasts out that clearly show they have not looked at my site, don't know what I do, and just waste time for both of us. Also, if you just sent me something, it takes time for us to review it, write about it, photograph it. I always send a heads-up email when something is scheduled and as a courtesy, another email with a link to the story when it's live. I don't appreciate being "hounded" in a week about "is it up yet?". It isn't, or you would know it.

### How has COVID-19 changed your coverage on Holiday Gift Guide items and what kind of pitches would you like to receive?

*Advice Sisters* prides itself on using authentic photos, video and of course editorial content. Due to limited resources and insurance, we work with non-returnable samples. If we ask for something, we WILL use it.

### What is the most helpful thing PR pros can do for journalists prepping Holiday Gift Guide pages in these challenging times?

Don't just ask for "numbers" because they can be purchased. Check social media to see if people are "real". If, for example, a beauty site seems to have mostly mechanics or people who don't speak the same language as your site, why do you care if there are ten gazillion followers for them? I know it's really challenging for PR pros to check out every site but if you can, take a quick look and know who you're dealing with and why. *Advice Sisters* has published lifestyle, beauty etc. for several decades consistently so you know we are building awareness. Our readers and followers care about what we write; they are not just numbers.



## James Andrew

Senior Media Editor, *Stylemtv.com*

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James Andrew is a fashion editor at *Stylemtv.com* covering fashion, electronics, beauty, grooming, travel, lifestyle, music, food, home decorating, and footwear, and oversees the Holiday Gift Guide submissions for which his deadline is November 2nd. Andrew has been with *Stylemtv.com* since 2002. Read on for his advice to PR professionals trying to reach him.

### How do you like to receive press releases?

Email.

### Do you have any advice for PR pros trying to pitch you?

Keep pitches short and describe the best features of the product. I prefer to receive information about any events, products, fashion, beauty, spa, tech, lifestyle, food and travel. When it comes to the gift guide, I am looking for fashion, virtual gifts, electronics, beauty, travel, lifestyle, music, food and wine, household, and shoes, etc; all of this will catch my attention.

### Do you have any pet peeves when working with PR professionals?

Long email pitches and no samples to test out the products.

### How has COVID-19 changed your coverage on Holiday Gift Guide items and what kind of pitches would you like to receive?

I have been receiving more samples to test out in the office and more virtual product tours. I like email and virtual pitches.

### What is the most helpful thing PR pros can do for journalists prepping Holiday Gift Guide pages in these challenging times?

It's important to highlight the best product features and benefits so consumers can make an informed decision on what to buy.



## CISION PITCHING KIT METHODOLOGY

The traditional and non-traditional media professionals featured in the Cision Pitching Kits have profiles in the Cision Media Database, and are vetted by the company's media research team to verify their positions as media professionals, influencers and bloggers. These individuals must meet certain additional criteria to be featured: they must cover the specific topic being highlighted in the kit, have given direct consent to be listed in the Media Database and must have been verified by the research team recently. The professionals must also be willing to be included in marketing materials and provide in-depth advice for PR pros.

**Are you a member of the media who wants to be featured in the next pitching kit?**

**FOR MORE ADVICE ON PITCHING,  
SEE OUR 2020 STATE OF THE MEDIA REPORT**

