

If you're planning on signing up for the Speed Dating for Writers and Publishers, here's what to expect and how to make the most of it!

☞ What to bring

- A filled-out contact card from the Welcome Table
- A well-rehearsed pitch
- A writing sample or table of contents if you have one (okay if you don't)

☞ How the event will work:

Places are limited to 18 participants, so come sign up at the Welcome Table when you arrive at the Casa d'Italia on Sunday, Dec. 7, doors open at 11 a.m. When you sign up, we'll give you some cards on which to write your name, contact info, and the title of your pitch. Enjoy book browsing while you wait, and head down to the Archives room in the basement in time for the start of the event at 2 p.m.

The six publishers will be seated in a row. The first six writers will each take a spot with one publisher, and when the bell dings you will have three minutes to connect. The publisher will take a moment to introduce themselves and their publishing house. Then you pitch your project. If the publisher wishes to follow up with you, they'll ask for your info (cards mentioned above). When the bell dings, move to the next seat.

You may have a project that is not a fit with a given publisher (you are working on a middle-school mystery and the publisher only does political books for adults), but we encourage you to talk with each publisher anyway. People move around in this business. You might end up writing something else next time. Or maybe the fiction publisher has a colleague who publishes kids' books, and he knows they'll love it. Writing and publishing are long games and they work through networks. Invest your three minutes in the unknown future.

But before any of that happens, before you arrive at the Casa d'Italia, **prepare your pitch.**

Your book doesn't have to be finished, although if a publisher is interested, they may ask for:

- a table of contents
- a short description
- a writing sample, possibly the first chapter.
- They may also ask for a comparative title or two – is your middle-school mystery Louise Penny meets R.L. Stine? Is your nature journal for people who enjoyed *Braiding Sweetgrass* and *Finding the Mother Tree*?

Most of all, think about how to craft your elevator pitch (a description short enough to be given on an elevator between floors). Practice it so it flows smoothly and with conviction. Time it so it doesn't take more than a minute or a minute and a half. Then you'll be relaxed and convincing. You'll be glad you did.