

“Bright, Shiny Objects for the Media”

by April Orcutt

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A joke among journalists is that editors love “bright, shiny objects” – that is, editors want stories about subjects that stand out – BLING!. And no subject is a better “bright, shiny object” than a total eclipse of the sun.

When pitching your story idea to editors, writers, producers or other publishers:

- People who have not yet experienced a total solar eclipse don’t understand. Create a vivid picture or story so they’re intrigued.
- Give the press a lively and accurate description in your proposal.
- Hook them – make them want to know more.
- Nothing boring – add pizzazz.
- Present your most important information in a concise but compelling first paragraph. Use as few words as possible to make your point.
- What’s the focus of that publication or show? What is that publication’s goals?
- Who are their readers or audience?
- What would their readers or audience like about an eclipse and your event?
- Tailor your press releases to the goals of the media you’re contacting.
- Emphasize *Total Solar Eclipse*: none of this 99% stuff. Get readers to drive those last few miles to get into the path of totality. Find an analogy to show that seeing a 99% partial solar eclipse is **not** the same as eating 99% of a pizza.
- Tell people to keep trying to get lodging – even days before the eclipse. Hotel rooms will open up.
- Learn the names of the media people you’re contacting – look on the publications’ websites or call their receptionist to ask their names (but don’t call the editors directly). Make your requests personal – and spell their names correctly.
- Keep subject lines in emails short – get straight to the point, like headlines do.
- Make the subject line of your press release or email a potential headline for the story you want them to tell.
- Have some fun writing your press releases – make them informative but entertaining.

So: find ways to create vivid imagery to intrigue readers and editors to encourage them to reach for the most amazing of bright shiny objects – a total eclipse of the sun.

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April Orcutt's stories have run in BBC Travel, *National Geographic Traveler*, *National Geographic Traveller India*, *TravelandLeisure.com* (digital *Travel + Leisure*), *Hemispheres* (United Airlines' inflight magazine), *Escape* (Australia), *Vacations & Travel* (Australia), *Alaska Air*, *International Daily News* (Chinese readership), AAA magazines, AARP Media, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Dallas Morning News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and more. April has won many awards, including two Lowell Thomas Golds Awards. She writes and photographs destination pieces, journey articles, round-ups and essays. She emphasizes nature, environmental awareness, quests, road trips (especially in EVs), independent travel, Indigenous cultures, women’s travel, voluntourism, quirky subjects and humor. April is looking for deeper stories about quests in intriguing places with engaging characters.