

What buyers hate in a first email

And what to do instead.

I run a small shop, and I read pitches from makers most weeks. Most of them are for good products. They fail because the email makes me do work I don't have time for. Here's what makes a first email hard to say yes to, and the easy fix for each.

✗ No prices.	Instead: Put wholesale and suggested retail (MSRP) in the email or on an attached line sheet. <i>If I have to write back to ask what it costs, it goes to the bottom of the pile.</i>
✗ Ignoring how the shop asked to be pitched.	Instead: 350 shops in our list use a form and 25 give an exact subject line. Do exactly that.
✗ Links and nothing else.	Instead: Show 3–5 photos in the email. Austin Art Garage says outright they won't click links alone.
✗ A 10 MB attachment, or six of them.	Instead: One PDF line sheet, kept small. Photos inline, sized for a phone.
✗ The whole founder story up front.	Instead: Five sentences: who you are, what you make, why it fits this shop, prices, how to order. <i>I want the story. I want it after I know the price works.</i>
✗ "Dear Shop Owner" and 40 shops in the CC line.	Instead: Use the shop's name. Name a product of theirs your line would sit next to.
✗ Not saying where else you sell.	Instead: List stockists, especially nearby ones. CITRINE and Frances ask for this by name.
✗ Not knowing your terms.	Instead: Decide before you send: wholesale, consignment, or both. Know your minimum order.
✗ Walking in with samples, or calling to "check you got it."	Instead: 30+ shops in our list say no calls, no walk-ins or no drop-offs. Email first. <i>A Saturday afternoon is when I'm busiest. A bag of samples at the counter puts me in an awkward spot.</i>
✗ Three follow-ups in two weeks.	Instead: One kind follow-up after a week or two, with something new: a bestseller, press, a seasonal item. <i>More than one starts to feel like pressure.</i>

The best pitch I get is one I can say yes to in five minutes, from my phone, between customers.

From Open Shelf — independent US shops that accept new brands

joinopenshelf.com · How to pitch a boutique, with an email template: joinopenshelf.com/guide/how-to-pitch-a-boutique/

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Shop counts are from published pitch instructions in the Open Shelf directory (625 shops, checked Oct 2026). Free to print, share, embed or repost. Please keep this credit.