



Press Release Guidelines

A press release is:

- A short, written document with a clear headline at the top, with
- Sufficient facts and quotes to support a short news story,
- Brief supporting background on the organization and product involved, and
- Contact information for journalists who want to follow up with a phone call for more information.
- Press releases require both good form and good content. The story or announcement should be in an appropriate and professional format so that journalists know what the story is about and find it easy to work with.

Following are some guidelines for writing good press releases:

- Remember that copywriters and editors cut from the bottom up when limited for space. So, utilize the inverted pyramid approach, which is written with the most important information and quotes first, followed by more details.
- A release should include WHAT the event is, WHEN the event is taking place, WHERE it is taking place, HOW MUCH it costs (if anything), WHO is involved, WHY it is taking place and HOW it is being made possible.
- The introductory paragraph should capture the reader's attention and contain the information most relevant to your message. This paragraph should summarize the news release such that if it were the only part seen by a reader, it would tell your entire message.
- The body of the news release (1-2 paragraphs) should pick up with the information in your introduction and should include more detailed important information.
- The final paragraph should restate or summarize the key points of your release and provide avenues for the reader to obtain additional information.
- Include a headline for your story. Be creative and keep it to one sentence.
- Press releases should be printed on one side of the page and no more than two pages long as a rule unless it is a major story.
- Report in the "third person." Example: "According to John Doe, the next version of Webster's Dictionary will contain...."
- Use both the day and date of the week if announcing a program or project. This allows the editor to cross-check for accuracy. For example, use Tuesday, July 9, 2008 to avoid needless agony over publishing the wrong date for a program.
- Be sure to spell out acronyms, such as General Federation of Women's Clubs.
- Always have someone proofread your press release to see if it makes sense or to find spelling errors and typos.
- If appropriate, include one or two quotes from organization or community leaders. This will increase the credibility of your release and the organization.

- When possible, list two people as contacts, or two phone numbers for yourself. An editor on a tight deadline needs to be able to contact someone immediately or your release might be replaced by someone else's.
- Be sure to include the date you wish the information to be published, such as "For Immediate Release."

Here are a few "don'ts":

- Don't use the word "I."
- Avoid using jargon that only a few other people would recognize.
- Avoid using more than 500 words. Be succinct and to the point.
- Avoid the use of exclamation marks (!). This conveys that your release is advertising, not news.
- Don't send inappropriate or late releases. Have a current list of media contacts and know the deadlines for publication.
- Don't make any errors! Typing, spelling or grammatical errors will put your story and your credibility into question. A proofreader will help avoid this.
- Don't bug reporters for things like copies of your printed story, or reasons for not printing your story. They are busy with the next story and you should be, too. If, however, there is a glaring error in their story, do call and politely tell them about it.
- Don't put off returning a phone call from a reporter. They work on a faster clock than we do. When a journalist calls about your release, return the call within hours, not days. If they don't hear from you, someone else's story will take priority.