

The News Release

A news release (also known as a press or media release) is an important tool to communicate your story to the media. It is an effective means of getting your message to reporters, of gaining positive publicity, and of providing the public with information.

Some questions to consider to help you evaluate your planned news release:

- Is the story of interest to at least 10 % of the audience?
- Is it timely?
- Does it have a local angle? Human interest angle?

When writing a news release for the media, keep the language simple and direct. Use short, clear sentences, devoid of jargon and hype. Remember to use quotable “bites” of information or short summaries of issues that are easy for both print and electronic reporters to use. Make your most important points first and then emphasize them. Your release needs to grab the reader.

A well written news release:

- Is single-sided, 1-2 pages, no more than 500 words.
- Is on company letterhead.
- Is concise, well written, factual and timely.
- Includes the location and date of the news release.
- Places media contact information in the upper right-hand corner below the company letterhead (name, telephone number, e-mail).
- Contains summary information about your organization.
- Contains one or two quotes.
- Provides a clear description of the news you are trying to communicate, using details and specifics.



News Release Guidelines

1. Type the release, double-spaced, with wide margins, on 8 ½ by 11 paper, single sided, on organizational letterhead.
2. At the top of the first page, place the name, telephone number, and e-mail address of your group's contact person.
3. List the release date/time in the upper left corner for:
 - IMMEDIATE RELEASE: This is used most of the time, and means that it can be run immediately; or
 - FOR RELEASE AFTER (TIME, DATE): This is called an embargoed release. It is used when a news conference/event has been planned and the release provides details or information that will be provided at the conference. Time the delivery so the release will not be received until the morning of your event.
4. Write a brief headline that tells what your story is about; center it on the page.
5. Put the most important information in the first paragraph – called the lead. It should grab the reader's attention and cover the 5 W's & H: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. It should not be longer than 25 to 30 words.
6. Write the rest of the story in "inverted pyramid" style with the most important information placed first. Try to make the story precise, clear and interesting to the reader. Include facts and quotations. Avoid jargon. Emphasize what is unique.
7. Try to keep the release to one page. If it is longer:
 - Type "-MORE-" at the bottom of each page to ensure that the entire release is read. Includes page numbers at the top left of each page.
 - Do not split paragraphs between pages.
8. End with "###" or "-END-" centered at the bottom of the final page.



Tips for Sending a News Release

- Send to only one person per media outlet. Who is the “sorter”?
- Know the best way to send the information - fax, e-mail, or regular mail.
- Know deadlines.
- Be clear on what you want the reader to know.
- Include a human-interest angle.
- Get the reader to see why “this” is important and why he/she should care.
- Send the release early. Do not send a release the day before an event and expect coverage. Call to find out when the news outlet likes to receive the information.
- Write in a professional manner. Using journalistic stylebook can be helpful.
- If you have photos/videos available, state that at the bottom of your release.
- You may also want to put a brief background paragraph about your organization at the bottom of the release.
- Check the facts, figures, spelling and grammar in your release. Proofread and edit your release to check that you have kept it short, and written a good headline and lead paragraph.
- Call to follow-up, do not just send it and forget it.



Checklist for News Release

Yes / No

- _____ Is the contact person's name/phone number listed at the top of the release?
- _____ Is the release dated and marked "For Immediate Release" or "Embargoed Until (Specific date)"?
- _____ Is the topic newsworthy?
- _____ Does it answer the questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- _____ Does it have a headline that catches the reader's attention and summarizes the story?
- _____ Is it double-spaced?
- _____ Is your organization's spokesperson quoted and the quote cleared in advance?
- _____ Have you checked the grammar and the spelling, including all names?
- _____ If you did not know about this event/topic, would reading this release interest you? If not, re-write it.
- _____ If photo opportunities or special visuals are available, are they mentioned?

