

How to Write a Press Release

Content:

Keep the following points in mind when writing your press release.

Is your news "newsworthy"? The purpose of a press release is to inform the world of your news item. A good press release answers all the "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why) in the first paragraph, providing the media with useful information about your organization and/or event.

Start strong. Your headline and first paragraph should tell the story. The rest of your press release should provide the detail. You have a matter of seconds to grab your reader's attention. Do not blow it with a weak opening. Be creative. One complete and concise sentence, preferably with a hook. Use proper title case, capitalizing every word except for the following: of, it, the, a, an, from.

Write for the Media. On occasion media outlets, especially online media, will pick up your press release and run it in their publications with little or no modification to what you send. More commonly, journalists will use your press release as a springboard for a larger feature story. In either case, try to develop a story as you would like to have it told. Even if your news is not reprinted verbatim, it may provide an acceptable amount of exposure.

Stick to the facts. Tell the truth. Avoid fluff, embellishments and exaggerations. If you feel that your press release contains embellishments perhaps it would be a good idea to set your press release aside until you have more exciting news to share. If your story sounds too good to be true, you are probably hurting your own credibility. Even if it is true, you may want to tone it down a bit.

Pick an angle. Try to make your press release timely. Tie your news to current events or social issues if possible. Make sure that your story has a good hook.

Use active, not passive, voice. Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Rather than writing "entered into a partnership" use "partnered" instead. Do not be afraid to use strong verbs as well. For example, "The committee exhibited severe hostility over the incident." reads better if changed to "The committee was enraged over the incident." Writing in this manner helps guarantee that your press release will be read.

Economics of words. Use only enough words to tell your story. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, or flowery language. If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it. Wordiness distracts from your story. Make each word count. Overall, your press release should be 350 – 500 words.

Beware of jargon. While a limited amount of jargon will be required if your goal is to optimize your news release for online search engines, the best way to communicate your news is to speak plainly, using ordinary language. Jargon is language specific to certain professions or groups and is not appropriate for general readership.

Avoid the hype. The exclamation point (!) is your enemy. There is no better way to destroy your credibility than to include a bunch of hype.

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Get Permission. Companies are very protective about their reputation. Be sure that you have written permission before including information or quotes from employees or affiliates of other companies or organizations. Any dispute resolution will favor the other company, meaning that your press release may get pulled.

About The 99s. Your press release should end with a short paragraph (see boilerplate examples in PRExample#1 and #2) that describes the international organization and your museum, fund, chapter, or section.

Do Include a photo or image. If you have a photo or flyer or image to include with the press release, do it!

Format:

Mixed case. NEVER SUBMIT A PRESS RELEASE IN ALL UPPER CASE LETTERS. This is very bad form and will more than likely be ignored by journalists. Use mixed case.

Correct grammar usage. Always follow rules of grammar and style. Errors in grammar and style affect your credibility. Excessive errors will cause your press release to be rejected. Write your press release in third person voice.

No HTML. Never embed HTML or other markup languages in your press release. Your press release will be distributed over a wide array of networks. Including such formatting will negatively impact the readability of your press release.

Proofreading. Proofread for grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, consistency and usage at least twice, preferably by readers who are unfamiliar with the material.

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