News Release Checklist

Name: _____ **Assignment:** _____ **Date:** _____

Overall Release Format

- ❑ 8.5" by 11" white paper.
- ❑ Wide margins—at least 1.5."
- ❑ Double-space the entire release <u>except</u> for the address information and header—double, double space between the release's paragraphs.
- ❑ Identify yourself in the upper left corner—include: contact person's name, title, company name, postal address, telephone, fax, e-mail.
- ❑ "For Immediate Release" line—or embargo date (only when absolutely necessary).
- ❑ Headline: **CENTERED, BOLD AND CAPITALIZED**. Neither write a catchy, newspaper-like headline nor a boring academic paragraph. Write an "informative" headline.
- ❑ Leave about two inches between the bottom of "for immediate release" and the top of the release's first paragraph for editing—center the headline in this area.
- ❑ <u>Never</u> break a paragraph across pages—start the paragraph on a new page if you have to.
- ❑ Include "More" at the bottom of all pages that continue to another page.
- ❑ Include a "slug" and page number, on all pages after the first (identifying info., top, right).
- ❑ Include a "boiler-plate" (informational) ¶ about the organization—2nd till last ¶. The boiler-plate ¶ is about the organization sending the release not the Public relations firm writing it.
- ❑ Include a "for more information, contact…" paragraph—last ¶.
- ❑ Place hash marks (###), centered, at the end of the document on a separate line.

Content

- ❑ Dateline (location and date, no year, in parentheses)—capitalize the city and state.
- ❑ Your news release has a news angle (state it briefly):_____
- ❑ Compelling/interesting summary lead using <u>some</u> (<u>not all</u>) of the five W's and H.
- ❑ The introduction should get interest/attention, reveal the topic, establish the newsworthiness, and reinforce your organization's credibility, if necessary.
- ❑ Make the release concise—you are <u>reporting</u> a newsworthy event not writing an editorial.
- ❑ Use short, active, sentences. If you need a comma, then the sentence is probably too long.
- ❑ Include supporting quotes that add information to your news angle.
- ❑ Localize and tailor the release, quote well-known, credible, sources not the Pub. Rel. director
- ❑ Be sure the release is free of cliches, technojargon, and unfamiliar terminology.
- ❑ Check the Associated Press Stylebook for proper usage: numbers, times, abbreviations, etc.
- ❑ Be sure that every fact is checked—be sure names are correct, check grammar/spelling.
- ❑ Review your organizations policy on disclosure.
- ❑ Write according to the inverted pyramid.
- ❑ The topic in the news release is localized and tailored for this media outlet.
- ❑ Someone else has read the final release before you give it to the instructor or mail it off. Final drafts are expected to be ready to be put in the envelope and mailed to the media.

Miscellaneous

- ❑ Lead and following paragraphs are short and kept to three–five sentences.
- ❑ Each paragraph follows-up on the news angle mentioned in the headline and the lead.
- ❑ If you have quotes, then start the paragraphs with them, then provide attribution.
- ❑ Never use "which" (this is often a run-on).
- ❑ Avoid vague pronoun use: "he, she, it, they, their." Be specific. Always use proper names.
- ❑ Avoid starting sentences with a dependent clause. "Because of the number of people interested in the event, . . ." Instead: "The event is attracting a lot of attention. . . ."
- ❑ Periods, commas, etc. go inside of quotes—as illustrated throughout this handout.
- ❑ Avoid "ing" verbs like the plague. Not: "Big Widget Corp. is planning to…" Instead: "Big Widget Corp. will . . ."
- ❑ Watch slang—got to, would of, could of, should of, etc.
- ❑ Can you say this more concisely?