

News Releases

The News Release is not free advertising it should be news

News Release Format

- 8.5” by 11” white paper
- Identify yourself in upper left corner. Include the name of the contact person(s) and their telephone number(s). People and not machines should always answer telephones
- Include “For Immediate Release”—or “Embargo until...” specified date (when absolutely necessary)
- Leave two inches at the top for editing (above the headline)
- Include wide margins and double space (all but the address and header info.)
- Never split paragraphs from one page to the next
- Place an identifying slug and page number on the top of each page after the first

Delivery of the Release

- Know everyone’s deadline—consult a Bacon’s Guide or Burrelle’s guide to determine deadlines.
- Mail by first class mail in a 9x12” envelope to a specific person and not just the “business editor”
- Use Fax, or e-mail only if you have a relationship with the editor
- Only send news releases to individuals who might have an interest in the news—do not use the shotgun approach and flood all media outlets
- Localize and tailor the release for each news outlet—make clear why your release is relevant for each outlet?

Content

- Effective leads, use some of the five W’s and H—not all!
- Be concise, get news angle across (see below for ideas on news angles).
- Avoid clichés, techno-jargon, and unfamiliar terminology.
- Check every fact, make sure names are correct, check grammar/spelling.
- Short is better than long—news outlets and editors can call for more info.
- Know your organizational policy about disclosure before you send out a news release.

Headlines are written by editors and depend on space and judgments of newsworthiness. A headline should get attention and interest, reveal the subject, be written clearly, and introduce any terminology/vocabulary essential to your position on the issue.

The Lead should contain everything essential in the body of the news release.

- Remember the **inverted pyramid**, editors cut from the bottom up so news releases (etc.) should include the important information early.
- Remember the **five W’s and the H**: Who, what, when, where, why and how—Leads should not contain all of these but should contain a few.
- Remember **introductions**: Be sure to get the interest/attention of the reader—preview the points, reveal the thesis/claim, establish the newsworthiness, and

establish your organizations credibility if necessary. Do not try and include every detail about what will happen, where, when, etc.

News Release Suggestions

- (1) Check the AP Guide when in doubt about numbers, times, and abbreviations.
- (2) Use short active sentences. If you need to use a comma, then the sentence is probably too long for news release writing.
- (3) Think of the format of the news releases as the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Each release tells a particular story.
- (4) Supporting quotes help humanize the news release. Make sure that the quote relates to the news angle.
- (5) Have someone read the final release before you give it to the instructor. Final drafts are expected to be ready to be put in the envelope and mailed to the media.

Tips For Writing News Releases

- Keep your lead to two-three sentences.
- Keep paragraphs short—2 or 3 sentences.
- If you have a quote, then start the paragraph with it.
- Never use “which” (this is usually a run-on).
- Avoid he, she, it, they, their. Be specific.
- Who/whom refer to people or animals with names, that/which refer to people, animals, and inanimate objects without names.
- Avoid starting sentences with a dependent clause.
- Include a stock (boilerplate) paragraph about the organization.
- Usually close the release with “for more information”
- Periods go inside of quotes.
- Avoid “ing” verbs like the plague.
- Always ask, “can I say this more concisely?”—after you think that you have.
- Watch slang—got, would of, should of, disrespected, etc.
- Remember, you only write the release, the journalist will write the story—don’t engage in puffery or hyperbole.

More Writing Tips (www.cla.sc.edu/Phil/writing.html)

1. Always avoid alliteration.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. And never start a sentence with a conjunction.
4. Employ the vernacular and thusly eschew pompous grandiloquence mimicking erstwhile styles of erudite expression.
5. Do not use, e.g., ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
8. Contractions aren’t necessary.
9. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
10. One should never generalize.
11. Understatement is always best.
12. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
13. Eliminate contractions—don’t use them ever!
14. The passive voice is to be avoided.

15. Don't be redundant; don't say the same thing repeatedly; don't use more words than necessary; it's very highly superfluous.
16. Profanity sucks.
17. Be more or less specific.
18. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
19. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
20. Comparisons are often as bad as cliches.
21. Avoid analogies in news releases.
22. Don't mix your metaphors before they're hatched. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
23. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
24. Who needs rhetorical questions?
25. Be careful to use apostrophe's correctly.
26. Do not use them pronouns as modifiers.
27. Remember to poofear.

Story Angles

- **Human interest** (people triumphing against adversity; single parent families; immigrant makes good; poor kid grows up to be millionaire; local kid makes good; new product will revolutionize healthcare, etc).
- **Community development/outreach** (new business to provide new jobs; new business to help the poor; changes in traffic patterns to help local residents, etc).
- **Grants/gifts/donations/sponsorships** (the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation to buy computers for the needy; Exxon to offer driving classes to the poor; Rutgers to award 200 new scholarships next semester, etc).
- **Awards** (Susan Citizen to receive Presidential award; Samuel Citizen earns his doctorate in Physics from MIT, etc.)
- **New Services** (the Federal Government to offer free course on running for public office; the Edison Rotary to help disadvantaged home-owners, etc.)
- **Economics/sports/fashion/weather or (gasp) real news** (should be obvious).