
Writing a News Release

Here's a brief primer on writing news releases. First of all, a news release is like a resume. The idea is to get the newspaper, radio or TV station's attention. Don't expect your release to be printed or aired verbatim.

Your release will probably be used as a source of information for a story written by a reporter. So when you get the call from the reporter, be prepared. If you don't answer the call, call the reporter back promptly. Don't expect to be interviewed in person, so hone your telephone skills

Some points on format:

- Keep it to 1-2 pages maximum (400-500 words)
- Use the inverted pyramid style of writing. That means start talking about the important stuff first.
- Write a strong lead (first paragraph) Include answers to the "5Ws&H" (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- Your release must be typewritten, double spaced, using only one side of the sheet . Put -more- at bottom and a slug (headline) on the top of subsequent pages. Use -30- or ### at the end of the release.
- It is very important to include:
- A contact name and phone number, who can be immediately available for follow-up inquiries
- A slug (short headline or identifier)
- The date

Some tips on writing:

- Make your key points in the first or second paragraph
- Use quotes to incorporate opinion, subjective ideas, explain rationale for actions. Avoid trite quotes, purge cliches.
- Use clear, concise, vivid language
- Sentences should not exceed 15 words; paragraphs should not exceed 30 words or four typewritten lines
- Check for proper grammar, spelling, punctuation
- Provide neat, clean copy
- Distribute on a timely basis, meet deadlines
- Proof, proof, poof!