

Information Sheet: How to write a press release

The first thing to remember is that journalists receive a very large number of press releases every day and to get yours to the top of the pile you need to do a really good job of writing it. You need a newsworthy story with a good angle, preferably strong local interest and a lot of human interest. The good thing is that the local press are *always* on the look out for a really strong, local story. Try to write your release in a journalistic style – snappy, sharp and to the point – so it is more likely to be published as it stands.

Some tips:

- Put the most exciting fact at the very beginning – press releases are cut from the end
- Keep it concise – one page is ideal and anything more than two is definitely too long
- The format should always be standard – start with the heading “press release”
- Include the contact details of someone who knows the project or event well and is happy to answer questions and give interviews. Put these details at the end
- Give it a clear headline which makes the likely content quite obvious
- Think about any good opportunities you could offer for a photograph and include details at the end. Remember that if you want publicity before the actual event you will need to *create* this opportunity
- Put a date on!
- Write in the third person and present the information objectively
- The first paragraph should always give a basic outline of the whole story – the who, what, when, where, why and how
- Use following paragraphs to expand and give more details. Use facts and feel free to put in a quotation as this will help to angle the story
- Avoid jargon at all costs
- Don't be tempted to be fluffy, flowery or use terms which are industry specific
- Proof read your work – check your grammar and spelling
- If you have lots of background information you think the journalist may be interested in add it separately as “Notes for Editors”
- If you attach a photograph make sure it's good quality and tells the right story
- Use a headed paper template (if you have it) which clearly identifies the name of your organisation
- Use double spacing (one and a half spacing as a minimum)
- Be legible – this means using a minimum 12 font and only using capitals in headlines
- Target your release as much as you can. Try to always send to named people rather than just “newsdesk”
- Work at building up your contacts and relationships over time.
- If you send press releases which are directly relevant to the recipient publication you have more chance of getting them published
- Check deadlines and make sure that your release will reach the correct journalist in plenty of time for them to act on it
- Follow up your release with a phone call but don't be a nuisance
- Remember that practice makes perfect!
- If you have a funder they may require all press releases to be approved by their own media department. This can take time, so make sure you allow for that when considering deadlines
- Remember to acknowledge funders etc. in press releases - even if it doesn't make it into print you can still show your release as evidence of adhering to funding conditions
- Remember to send your press release to digital media so that it can be included on blogs and in e.newsletters. Post it on local Facebook pages.

You may like to consider nominating a member of your group to attend a half-day course on writing press releases if you consider you are likely to have a lot of contact with the press.

It is often possible to gain excellent coverage on local radio and, if your story is really newsworthy or quirky and has a strong visual element, you may also be successful in interesting regional television. If this is something you think is likely to occur you may wish to attend a media training workshop; this will help you to manage your nerves in front of a camera or a microphone, as well as learn how to get your point across in the best way.