



Writing a Press Release That Gets Published

News editors work amidst a blizzard of news leads and press release submissions. They keep their sanity by using a split second assessment of the multitudes of press releases that cross their path every day. They aren't looking for great stories because they are likely all great stories—no shortage there. They're looking for reasons to reject. Take care of these priorities to ensure yours makes the cut:

Format: Fit it to one page using single-spaced, block paragraphs (no indent at start) with a space between each paragraph, 12 point type and minimum one inch margins.

Title: This is a condensed form of the news you are releasing and must grab the attention of the editor, and later, his/her readers.

Descending order of importance: Your first paragraph must capture the news, who is involved and why it is important to readers. Following paragraphs become progressively less important. Also, within each paragraph, the sentences must have a descending order of importance, which makes your very first sentence the most important of all—often called your “hook” or your “lead.” This rule, often called the “inverted pyramid” (see next page for an illustration), is important because many publications will condense your press release into a shorter blurb by either taking only the first few paragraphs or taking the first sentences from all of your paragraphs. If the editor's quick scan finds a jumble of information not in this format, your release could end up in the recycle bin.

Never “bury your lead”: Novice press release writers tend to start with lots of uninteresting information before getting to the hook or lead. If an editor reads a boring first sentence, that press release is dead.

Avoid exaggeration and opinion: Outlandish claims such as “the best,” “the most exciting,” “never before seen,” and so on, will doom your release (and that's no exaggeration...). Instead, ensure the voice you use is in third person (never first person) and that of an objective reporter presenting the news, letting the news be the attention grabber. This tip will also help you avoid writing a press release that is not newsworthy.

Include a quote: Editors expect a quote from someone who has been impacted by the news. Make the quote its own paragraph, preferably the second or third. Also, if you're itching to include a subjective opinion point, the quote allows this. Make sure the person you quote approves of the wording before you release your press release.

Include your web link and contact info: You will have your contact info at the top, but always include it as part of the text to ensure it makes it into the published news item.

Follow submission guidelines: Every news publication has a preferred way to receive press releases. Find these guidelines on their web site or by giving them a call. Then follow these guidelines to a “T” for each publication.

Logo and tagline of organization if you have one

Contact: name, title for campaign • email • phone

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (this is important to include because some releases are held for release on specific, future dates)

Title

city, state – date – (body of text, three to five paragraphs in descending order of importance, no more than one page)

Opening Paragraph

The news – your hook or lead followed by who is impacted and why this is important to readers

One to three middle paragraphs

One of these should be a quote, the others offer further details about the news

Concluding paragraph

Wrap up the story and include your contact info. If you haven't included your web link above, add it here

#

(these three marks show that the release has ended, very important)