

Media Tip Writing a Press Release

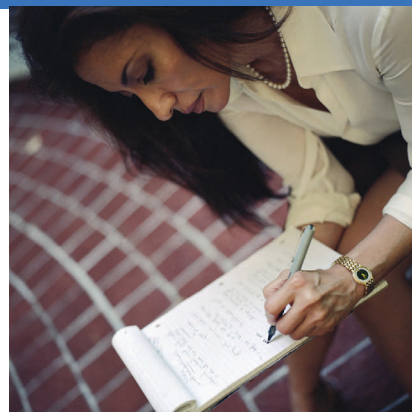
Why write a press release?

To get reporters' attention so they want to cover your story. A press release is like a resume for your story...one page that is so interesting a reporter wants more.

Here are five steps to a writing a press release that gets noticed.

Attention-Grabbing Headline

Reporters, editors and news directors get a stack of news releases each day. They skim, not read. Your headline may be the only thing that gets read. Make sure it jumps off the page and grabs attention.



Format

Double-space your release. End your release with a plug (next meeting time/location) for the organization, including a website address for more information about your issue.

Lead Paragraph

Your first sentence should summarize “who,” “what,” “when,” “why,” and “where” (and sometimes “how”). Focus on “what’s new” and “why this is important”. Use one noun and a strong verb. Your lead paragraph should be strong enough to stand on its own, even if the rest of the release gets cut.

Example: Wauwatosa, February 23 - One in three smokers in Wisconsin will be diagnosed with cancer by the time they reach 50 years old, which means this state will see nearly 8,000 new cancer victims a year, according to a new study in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Strong Quotes

People read quotes. Any opinion, assertion, or judgment must appear in quotes. A strong quote answers: “Why is this important?” “Why should I care?”

Strong: “This proves overwhelmingly that tobacco is Wisconsin’s most serious health threat. Not taking action to reduce smoking would be immoral.”

Weak: “This was a really good study that will help us in the discussion of how to improve healthcare.”

Use Facts Judiciously

Don’t bog your reader down with facts and statistics. Pick one or two. Save most data and more complex facts for a fact sheet that will accompany the press release. That way, if reporters need facts for their story, they’ll have them.

Contact Information

Always include the name and phone number of the person available for additional comment.