

# How to write a press release

**While some might question whether press releases are even necessary in the age of email, they still remain one of the simplest ways of publicising an announcement through the media both quickly and accurately. Well written content can easily be adapted for web stories, newsletters and other communications.**

This guide provides information and advice on writing a press release, what is involved and how to extract the best from any local content.

## Think

When people read newspapers they do not read every single article or item. They tend to scan read, and pay particular attention to story lines and story beginnings.

If they are interested they tend to carry on reading. If not, they will skip to the next story or article.

To grab a reader's attention you need to put the key information in your opening paragraph. This is often called the 5 Ws.

- WHO will be doing it?
- WHAT will they be doing?
- WHEN will they be doing it?
- WHERE will they be doing it?
- WHY will they be doing it?

## Act

You can then complete any other information in your following paragraphs, using these guidelines.

- Keep it simple, and concentrate on the main points.
- Keep it brief (one A4 sheet is best).
- Keep to the point. Try to write sentences of no more than 10 words, and only put one idea in each sentence.
- Do not use technical terms or academic jargon.
- Use direct language if possible.
- Make sure your story is about people, and how people will benefit from what you are doing.
- Include a quotation from a named person. Quotations make a Press release lively and interesting, and can be used to express opinions. Make sure you have covered the 5 Ws before you use a quotation.
- Make it active.
- Work on your proposition. Why will local people be interested in your story?
- Get your facts right.
- Always give names and contact numbers. Make sure someone will be available in the evenings as well as during the day to field any queries.
- At the bottom of the press release give details of any photographic opportunities, with times, date and locations if possible.
- If you want to include some background information about the release or your organisation, list these under a heading entitled 'Notes for Editors'.

- When you have written your news release, take a natural break and then revisit the content. Have you put the most important information in the first paragraph? Have you got an interesting title or heading, and is it easy to read and understand?
- Ask somebody to check and proof-read your press release to make sure it is clear and concise, and devoid of any grammatical or spelling mistakes.

## Send

Most news releases are now sent by email. News desks receive hundreds of emails each day so you need to make sure yours is clear, easy for the journalist to use, and has some local interest.

- Ensure that the heading of your news release is in the subject line of the email. Here is a simple example: Press release: Busy road residents turn dangerous road into play area.
- Paste your news release into the main content body of the email. Never send it as an attachment.
- Put clear spaces between each paragraph. This makes it easier to read.
- If you have a good quality photograph save it as a .jpg (JPEG file) and attach it to the email. Provide a caption for it.
- Write 'END' at the end of the release, and then put contact details, photographic opportunities, notes and relevant information which may be used by any editor as a supplementary.

## Timing

Think about when you want the relevant media to receive your Press release.

- You can actually send two news releases if you prefer. One in advance of any event and one after. You may get double coverage, which is always useful and helps to raise your organisational profile.
- With an advance news release send it to any News Desk a week or so before the event. Bear in mind publication days if it is a weekly circulated paper.
- If you are sending a news release after an event it has to be published on the day so give this some advance thought and preparation.
- Papers, TV and radio all have deadlines, and are they reluctant to move or alter these.
- If speed or urgency is important, email or fax the Press release.
- If you want to let the press know in advance about an event, but do not want the event publicised until a certain date, you can use an embargo. This means writing embargoed until 3pm, on the 25th December 2017 for example. Do not use this tactic unless you really need to. It can often cause confusion and in a hectic journalistic world the press release could be placed on hold and missed at a later date. It happens.

## Press and media responses

Local journalists and local papers are extremely busy, and are regularly inundated with requests for news stories. You may have to contact the news desk if you have sent a release by Email but have yet to receive a reply. It may be that the paper are considering publication, or it may be that due to the volume of requests they have missed, or are yet to look at your story.

You may need to telephone the news desk if you are unsure of the status of your press release. Before you contact the news desk, make sure you re-read your release, and reacquaint yourself with the facts and the story.

Always be polite but firm.

Use this template example as a means of introduction.

Hello, I am (name) from (organisation). I emailed a press release to you on (date) about (subject). Please could I speak to the journalist who is covering this story?

You may be asked to email the press release again. While this is frustrating, it happens regularly so be patient.

Always remember to ask for the name and email address of the person you are speaking to, and email the release immediately before they forget or become side-tracked to another story.

If you need advice or further guidance on compiling or distributing a press release, then please contact Support Cambridgeshire by email at [info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk](mailto:info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk).