

50 Tips on How to Write an Effective Press Release

50 Tips for Writing an effective Press Release

Let's face it. At sometime in our lives we are going to have something to promote. There's no better way to do it than getting free publicity through a press release.

Here are 50 tips to ensure you write a good one:

- Your press release must always tell who, what, where, when, and why.

- You must determine the subject of your story.

- What is your thesis? Your thesis is the purpose for why you are writing the press release.

- Open with a strong headline to grab the reader's attention.

- The headline along with your opening paragraph should tell a gripping story.

- Stick to the facts.

- When giving the details of your press release, be sure to illustrate the story to your reader. Use real life examples that they will be able to relate to or visualize.

- Present yourself as serving the community, rather than merely trying to seek publicity and make a profit.

- Interview people regarding your subject.

- 1-2 pages maximum (400-500 words).

- Inverted pyramid format.

- Typed, double spaced, one side of sheet.

- If more than one page, type -more- at bottom of pages.

- Include the Contact Name and Phone number (Be available for follow-up inquiries).

- Include the Release time (Immediate release or embargo with specified time).

- Make your key points near top (first or second paragraph).

- Be sure to include standard (ideal) description of organization.

- Work other (positive) points into text.

- Sentences should not exceed 15 words; paragraphs should not exceed 30 words or four typewritten lines.

- Follow news style (not advertising style).

- Opening Paragraph: Sometimes called a summary lead, your first paragraph is critical. This paragraph must explain "the five Ws and one H" of the story -- the who, what, when, where, why, and how. This paragraph must summarize the press release, with the following paragraphs providing the detail.

- The Hook: The opening paragraph must also contain the hook: the one thing that gets your audience interested in reading more. But remember that the hook has to be relevant to your audience as well as to the news media. A hook is not a hard sell or a promotion, just a factual statement.

- The Body: The body of the press release should be written with the most important information and quotes first. This "inverted pyramid" technique is used so that if editors need to cut the story to fit space constraints, they can cut from the end without losing critical information.

- The Closing Paragraph: Repeat the critical contact information, including the name of the person, his or her phone number and/or email address.

- How are people going to relate to this and will they be able to connect?

- Make sure the first 10 words of your release are effective, as they are the most important.

- Avoid excessive use of adjectives and fancy language.

- Print the words "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" in the top left-hand margin in all caps. Follow this line with relevant contact information: name, title, address, phone number, e-mail address.

- Create a headline and center it in bold type just above the first line of the body of the press release.

- Create a dateline - the first line of the body of your press release - that includes the city where the release is generated and the date (i.e. SEATTLE, WA - January 1, 2006).

- Include some tantalizing details or facts to spark curiosity. A good press release not only informs but also teases. Get people to come visit.

- Wrap up the last paragraph with a "for additional information" line, a place to find more details. An annual report or a Website can be great sources of information.

- Center these marks, " # # #" or "-30-", at the bottom of the page to indicate the end of your release.

- Press releases are written in block style, so no paragraph indentation is necessary.

- Explain in detail: who cares; why you should care.

- Include in the second 'informative' paragraph a quote that gives the release a personal touch.

- The rest of the press release serves to back up whatever claims were made in the lead and headline.

- Get someone to proofread your press release.

- One more trick: below the ###'s, add a line that says something like:
If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Ted Reimers, please call ###-###-#### or e-mail email@example.com

- The majority of electronic news releases are 500 words of text organized into five, short two to three sentence paragraphs.

- Do your research. Find out who (which reporter/journalist) would most likely be covering your story.

- Personalize the press release to the reporter as much as you can, and even address it to his/her attention.

- Try not to make it appear like you are firing off multiple press releases a day. Take your time and understand the value of just getting coverage by one news source.

- Sometimes taking the initiative and calling the reporter, either before or after sending the press release can be a good thing.

- Don't harass or overwhelm the reporter. Understand they do have deadlines to meet.

- Know when the news source has their print deadlines. Submit your story allowing plenty of time for review.

- Journalists are always looking for fresh ideas. They must write fresh content 365 days a year.

- Unless for national releases, Try and localize the press release. Most local papers really like to stress "community".

- Writing a press release is the best way to get free advertising and is almost always more effective, as it doesn't seem like an advertisement.

- Package the release as neatly as possible. First impressions are everything.

