

HOW to Write an EFFECTIVE Press Release.

A press release is one of the best techniques for publicizing an event or calling attention to an issue. A well-written, well-distributed and well-timed press release is not difficult or expensive to produce, yet can be effective and useful. The key to writing an effective press release is getting it read and the information published. With these objectives in mind, the most important elements of the press-release are a clear and engaging text, careful selection of recipients, and good timing of release. See the guidelines below before writing your press release.



1. Format

Correct formatting is important because it conveys the necessary information in a readable, accessible and professional manner. Basic formatting should include a simple and easily recognizable format, and a clear presentation. The following is a checklist for standard press release format.

- > **standard title:** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.
- > **Contact Information:** for example: Nuclear Age Peace Foundation PMB 121, 1187 Coast Village Road, Suite 1, Santa Barbara, CA 93108-2794 Contact: Jane Advocate, (805) 965-3443, advocacy@napf.org
- > **subject title** should be succinct and informative, conveying the topic matter while intriguing the reader.
- > **body** should present the most important information, including *who, what, where, when and why*, in the first sentences of the releases body, emphasizing why the event is newsworthy. Follow with supporting background information and details. Some suggest a quote from an involved activist to add credibility and depth to the release.
- > **Conclusion** should offer who is representing this message. For example what does your foundation or company stand for? The last part of the Press Release should include your contact information, for example: For further information about the Waging Peace campaign, visit the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's website at www.wagingpeace.org or call (805)-965-3443

End the release with a ### sign to indicate the end of the document

Always remember to:

- 1. Double space.**
- 2. Use black ink.**
- 3. Use white paper.**
- 4. Proofread for grammar and spelling.**
- 5. Keep the press release to under one page.**

2. Style

Press release writing should be easy to read and engaging. It should also remain reportorial, and not opinionated. In order to make the release readable for the recipient and even publishable, a journalistic style of clear, direct and concise statements is most effective. An engaging style makes the news clear in the beginning, followed by some supporting details, and leaves the reader's interest piqued to learn more about the event, the organization, or the topic. Finally, a good release focuses on the human interest of the story without passing judgments or making opinions.

3. Distribution

Distributing the press release to the right reporters, editors and broadcasters is the next important step. The target audience and the appropriateness of the media are the most important considerations in determining the target media. Radio stations, television, weeklies, and dailies all carry local news. The internet is another resource, for posting on a website, a discussion board, or an internet publishing company. After the selection of media outlets has been narrowed to those your audience might be exposed to, research who at those outlets is likely to read and cover your story. Some guidelines:

Send releases to the reporter(s) most likely to use the information.

Ask for recipients' preferred method of delivery, but when in doubt, use mail by post.

Refrain from sending mass emails, instead directly addressing them to the recipient.

4. Timing

Timing the press release for optimal effectiveness is the final step. Timing should consider both the media reporters and the target audience. Find out from the media source or preferably your chosen recipient what their cutoff time is, but some general timing considerations follow:

- > Radio cutoff is generally up to an hour before "drive time."
- > Television cutoff is generally up to 2 hours before newscasts.
- > Weeklies' cutoff is generally up to 2 days prior to printing.

Dailies' cutoff is generally up to three hours prior to printing, but stories are generated between 48 and 24 hours to publication. Monthlies generally plan two or more months in advance.

For feature length attention, considerably more time is needed for a story to be developed.

Publications usually cater to people's desire to hear good news in the morning and the beginning of the week, placing bad news at the end of the day or week.

If the timing does not work the first time, resend the release as a "re-release."