

How to Write a Press Release

News editors are busy. They receive hundreds of releases a week, so yours has to be clear, concise and to the point.

E-mail is the preferred method of sending press releases these days. Find specific newsroom employees, and send your releases to them. Avoid sending releases to generic addresses such as `newstips@wttv.com`.

Some Guidelines

Send the releases on program letterhead whenever possible. At the very minimum, ensure the LEAVE A LEGACY logo is used. We've enclosed electronic letterhead on this CD for the purpose of e-mailing releases and other professional communications.

Insert the date on the left, and contact information on the right at the top of the release. (Common myth: it is not correct to use the phrase, "For Immediate Release." Use the specific date you want the information released, or it may air on the wrong date!)

Have one headline in all caps, followed by a sub-headline. These lines are single-spaced. Type the headline and subhead in bold print. The sentences should be short and capture the main point of your release.

Dateline. In parentheses before you write the main body of your release, indicate where the event is taking place. The correct format is (INDIANAPOLIS, Ind.) The Associated Press Style Guide is a great resource for proper state abbreviations for news media.

The rest of your release will be double-spaced.

First paragraph: The "lead" of the release should be no more than two sentences. This graph should capture the main point of the release, without sounding too much like the headline.

The next graphs should address the who, what, why, when, where, and how.

In the rest of the release, incorporate quotes from members of your organization. Quote members of the community as well.

Near the end of the release, use a boilerplate statement, something that summarizes the overall mission of your program, and be sure to provide a web address and phone number for general inquiries.

If you are hosting an event, be sure to include directions and parking instructions. If you expect a large media presence, it's always a good idea to reserve a few parking places for media. If you need to use a map, put it on a separate page with directions.

The release should be limited to one or two pages at most (not including the map/directions page). You're flirting with disaster if your release is lengthier than that—it will be lost in the newsroom jungle!

If there is a second page, the main headline should be at the top, followed by page number—
CHARITABLE BEQUEST IMPROVES LIVES IN SOUTHERN OHIO-2

At the end of your release, type ##, so the editor doesn't go in search of additional pages.

It's always helpful to have someone who isn't close to the event read over the release to let you know if the main point comes across clearly. Get others involved in the proofreading process!