

TEN TIPS FOR WRITING A MEDIA RELEASE THAT GETS PUBLISHED

Media releases are a great way to draw attention to your organisation's projects and achievements, increase support and generally open doors! However, news desks can receive hundreds - even thousands - of releases each day, so to make yours stand out, here are ten top tips:

- 1. Think like a journalist:** Find the 'news angle' to your story. What is relevant, 'newsworthy', or different about it? What will the end result be: who is it benefitting and how? Craft your headline to express benefits and grab attention. If you're stuck, an online search may uncover an interesting statistic or topical issue to frame / introduce your media release.
- 2. Use newspaper style writing (the inverted triangle):** Tell the story by starting at the pointy end, but cover all the bases, i.e. answer: who, why, what, where, when and how in the first few sentences, just like they do in newspaper articles.
- 3. Keep it simple, keep it short:** A media release can be half a page, and should never be more than two pages. Sentences should be no longer than 25 - 30 words. Paragraphs should be only two or three sentences. Keep it short and punchy, and write for "scan-ability".
- 4. Know your audience:** Tailor the release to the people you want to reach - both the journalist or editor and those who you want to do / think / feel something after reading your story. Use the language they use.
- 5. Use quotes, but use them wisely:** The essence of a good quote is one clear idea. Use them to explain or expand on facts already introduced, or to comment or add colour or depth to your story - to help bring it to life. Use them to endorse or prove a point, rather than introduce key facts. Always introduce the person making the quote (give their name and role) before quoting them. Make sure they have some authority (such as your President) or are an 'expert', before you include them.
- 6. Include a call to action:** Use the last paragraph to sum it up and make a call to action - such as requesting support, encouraging attendance at an event or participation in a community initiative, or a change in behaviour.
- 7. Edit ruthlessly for clarity:** For each sentence, ask yourself 'So what?' and remove it if there is no good answer. Change all passive words to active words and remove all unnecessary words.
- 8. Cover the basics - and look professional:** Even if you've never sent out a release before, you can still look like you know what you're doing, simply by formatting a release professionally. You can set it out any way you like, but the following are common practice:
 - Organisation logo (top left)
 - Heading (centred)
 - Subheading if necessary (centred, bold)
 - Date of release (start of para 1)
 - 'For immediate release', or 'Embargoed until DATE / TIME' (top right)
 - 'ENDS' (after last para)
 - Your contact information for enquiries
 - Your website address (footer or centre bottom) and/or brief summary of your organisation.

Leave plenty of white space, and use bullet points to display lists or complex information.
- 9. Imagery:** It's an old adage, but so true: a picture is worth a thousand words. If you have a good, high resolution picture, include it.
- 10. Be accessible:** Make sure whoever's contact details are on the release will be contactable when it is distributed. You might miss a golden opportunity if a journalist wants to follow up / set up an interview but cannot reach anyone.

Good luck!