

Seven Steps to Write Your News Release

1. Think first why this information would be of interest to other people. While there are a number of possible formats, the top of the release should include your contact information and the date. In this, you're giving the editor a quick way to get further information if needed. Your contact information should include the name of a person and their title, an address and phone (including extension). A website, blog and twitter account could be included since they might also be useful in making contact or gaining further information. Indicate the release is: For Immediate Release.

2. To start the release, include the city and state of origin of the release in parentheses followed by an ellipsis (three periods...). Then write in an inverted pyramid style. This style forces the most important items to come first followed by the less important but interesting items that add to the story. The first paragraph generally answers the who, what, when, where, why and how of the release. This is basic journalism. The last paragraph in the release can include standard information about your organization. This is known as "boilerplate" and can be used on all releases.

3. It's a good idea to include a quote in the second or third paragraph, being certain to check the quote with the person you are quoting. You might use an actual quote, or create a quote with which the person you are quoting can agree or change.

4. The release should be one page; two at the most with the second page containing the contact information and headline. At the end of the release, center either "-The End-" or three hash marks on the page. This indicates the release is complete.

5. Once you've completed the article, write a headline. Capitalize the first letter of big words, but leave the connecting words (a, and, the, etc.) in lower case. The headline needs to be concise, yet interesting and newsworthy enough to get the attention of the editor and the reader. This headline may or may not be used, but it should grab the attention to "sell" the "gatekeeper" who decides whether or not to use the story.

6. If you are emailing the release, include the whole release in the email. If you are mailing it, include only one release per envelope. In any event the address should be to a person. Some quick Internet research should provide you with both a name and a title of the person you're trying to reach. If not, a phone call asking to whom such a release should be sent will give you the information.

7. You can follow-up on your news release with a later call to the person to whom the release was sent. If the release was used, thank the person for using it. If it was not used, ask what you could or should be doing differently to submit a release. Don't be afraid to admit your ignorance or inexperience. Most "gatekeepers" will suggest how you can better work with them if you have followed the steps above.