

How to Write a Press Release

What you have already done

At this point, you have already distributed your pitch letter to the media sources that you hope to have at your event. You have followed up with them by calling and informed them of any additional plans of interest to them or any event changes. The purpose of your letters and calls has been to attract the media to your event by showing how it is of interest to their audience.

Purpose of the press release

Your press release serves two purposes: to attract the media to your event and to clearly spell out the message that you want the media to report to their audiences. Your press release may be printed word-for-word. Therefore, be precise with the language you choose and make sure your intended message comes across loud and clear. Your press release gives the media the go-ahead to cover your event in advance. Release it one to two weeks before your event. Use an Associated Press Stylebook to check your work.

Press release logistics

When the time comes to distribute your press release, you will hopefully have a relationship with someone at each media source that is going to cover your event and know how to deliver the release. Many reporters prefer to receive press releases via e-mail. Make sure and cut and paste the text of your press release into the body of the e-mail since many reporters will not open e-mails with an attachment due to computer viruses. You may also mail or fax the press release.

Format of a press release

Heading

- Follow the format in the sample press release included below.
- The release date should be one to two weeks before the event(s).

Title

- This is the most important part of the release; if it fails to catch the editor's eye, he/she may not think the event is interesting
- Include the event's name in the title to make it identifiable, i.e. "Act! Speak! Build! Week." Make sure to also include Habitat for Humanity in the title.

Lead paragraph

- Start with the city and state where your event will be held.
- Include the date you are sending the press release.
- Include three points about your event that are uncommon, effective and/or unique in attracting the editor's interest.

Second paragraph

- Include a quote from a Habitat spokesperson.

Third paragraph

- Build upon the three points of your event that you outlined in the lead paragraph.
- Add color, shape, shade and size to them.

- This is the time to color in the outline from the lead paragraph.
- Also include relevant information such as time, date and place of the event.

Fourth paragraph

- Include a quote from your chapter president or steering committee chair that speaks to the reason for the event, which is advocating for affordable housing.

Fifth paragraph

- Highlight the history and Habitat activities of your group.
- Keep this brief — three sentences are sufficient.
- Include the chapter's/group's "wish list" for tools, volunteers, donations, etc.; highlight any ongoing or special events, such as weekend workdays, Collegiate Challenge trips, large annual fund-raisers, etc.

Final paragraph

- This is called the HFHI boilerplate. It is a standard description of the organization that is frequently used.