

Press Releases

The press release is a short, written summation detailing facts and viewpoints. It is nearly always written by the organization involved with, or affected by, the event. The release's primary intended audience is reporters covering the incident who will use the information to write a story. Once received by reporters, the release may be printed, broadcast, or uploaded verbatim or nearly verbatim, used only as a reference by the reporter, or ignored completely.

Content of a Press Release

The purpose of the press release is to answer the basic questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how. This requires the release to be at least several paragraphs in length.

First paragraph: Provide two to three short sentences describing the current situation. This paragraph addresses questions relating to who, what, where, why, when, and how.

Next paragraph (optional): Provide a quote from an official or senior manager demonstrating leadership and expressing caring. This paragraph should address the question, "Why is this issue or event important?"

Next paragraph (Optional): Provide information on actions that are being taken.

Next paragraph (Optional): Provide information on actions that will be taken.

Next paragraph (Optional): Describe coordination activities with your emergency response partners.

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Press release guidelines

1. Format your press release using the standard format for producing a press release (see below). Reporters and editors are more likely to read the release if it uses the standard news release format and contains information about who, what, where, when, why, and how.
2. Your release should go on your organization's letterhead, preferably with your logo.
3. At the top left hand side of the page, or in the top center, write in bold-face the words "**PRESS RELEASE**" or "**NEWS RELEASE**" in all capital letters or with the first letter of each word in capital letters.
4. Move down two lines. Write in bold-face "**For Immediate Release:**" in all capital letters or with the first letter of each word in capital letters.
5. Next to, or immediately below the words, "**For Immediate Release:**" put the date of the release.
6. Immediately below, or to the right of, "**For Immediate Release:**" write the word "**Contact:**" or "**Contact Information:**" in bold-face. Next to this write a contact phone number that reporters may call for additional information. Some organizations add the name of a contact person, the name of a department, and an email address. If this option is chosen, the contact person should be your organization's public information officer or spokesperson.
7. Two lines below the date and contact information put your headline. Your headline should be bold, in a larger font, with the first letter of each word capitalized. Some organizations prefer to center the headline. The headline should be a brief summary (no more than two to three lines) of what your news release is about. It needs to be informative and grab the attention of the reporter or editor. Keep in mind journalists receive many news releases each day. The headline should be clear, to the point, and encourage the reader to read the rest of the release. You can include a subheading to provide more information and entice the reader to read on.
8. Two lines below your headline insert the name of the town or city where the release is coming from, followed by a dash. This is called the dateline. You can boldface the city if you choose. (for example, **Philadelphia, PA -**)
9. After the dateline is where your text begins. The first paragraph of your release should be brief and include information pertaining to who, what, where, when, why, and how. Everything you want the reader to know quickly should be in this paragraph.

10. You should double-space your text and use a 12 point font, such as Times New Roman or Arial. Some organizations indent paragraphs. Others do not. Leave plenty of white space in your press release. Use ample margins around your page.
11. The remaining paragraphs of the release should provide information you believe will interest the reader.
12. Your next to last paragraph should be similar to your first paragraph.
13. Your last paragraph should state: "For more information, call..." or "Visit our Web site at www... for information materials." You should direct the reader to a place where they can get more information on the issue.
14. A couple of spaces below your final paragraph, centered on the page, put "####". This signifies the end of your release.
15. At the end of the release (after your last paragraph and before the ####), consider including a couple of sentences about your organization. This can include what your organization's mission is or what your organization is tasked to do. At the end of the description, refer the reader to your organization's Web site.
16. If the news release goes beyond one page, then include the word "- **MORE** -" or "- more -" under the last line on the first page. Some organizations write this word in capital letters and use bold-face. Others do not.
17. If the news release goes on to a second page, write the headline, or a shortened version of the headline, and "Page 2."
18. Keep your sentences short with an occasional longer sentence to break the monotony.
19. Keep the news release brief. Keep it to no more than two pages and to the point. Refer readers to a phone number or Web site they can go to for additional information.
20. Present only facts; leave out editorializing.
21. Avoid using acronyms, jargon, and technical language.
22. **Have a least one communicator and one subject matter expert proofread the news release.** A pair of "fresh" eyes may catch mistakes you missed. A major typo or mistake can discredit your release. Most people have trouble proofreading their own writing. Ask a colleague to proofread it for you.
23. If it's a local event or topic, indicate the name of the town or city in the headline. This will increase the likelihood the local media will pick up the story.

24. Include in the news release authentic statements of empathy, caring, and compassion, especially when there is high concern, high stress, or harm to people, property, or the environment. It is typically best for these statements to come from a senior leader of the organization. The statements should be set off with quote marks. For example, “Our thoughts and prayers go out to the employees injured in this accident and to their families” stated [insert name of senior official]. Or, “I know many people are worried and concerned about events happening at the facility. As a community, I believe we can make it through this difficult time,” stated [insert name of senior leader].
25. Make sure your release is clear and simple.
26. Perform a readability test to ensure the news release is between the sixth and eighth grade reading-level.
27. Some online news services require a summary of your news release. This is because some media outlets will distribute only your headline, summary, and a link to your news release.
28. Make sure your release gets all of the organizational clearances and approvals needed.
29. Make sure you share your release with partners for vetting before releasing to the media.

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Release Format

The release should following the format provided below.

[Organization's name on letterhead with logo]

Press Release

For Immediate Release: [Insert date]

Contact: [Insert name of media representative]

[Insert name of organization]

[Insert telephone number]

[Insert fax number]

[Insert email address]

[Insert after-hours telephone number]

[Insert Web site]

[Insert headline here, bold-faced, with the initial letter of each word in capital letters]

[City, State] – [Insert Date] – [Text goes here, often double-spaced with indented paragraphs]

[First paragraph: short (less than 30 words), containing the most important information]

[Second, third, fourth ... paragraphs: short, containing supplemental information. Try to include a quote from leadership within the first few paragraphs]

If the news release is more than one page long, insert the following:

– more –

Center the word at the bottom of the page, then continue onto the next page with a shortened headline and page number as follows:

[Insert shortened headline] – Page 2

[Next to last paragraph: similar to your first paragraph]

[Last paragraph: put “For more information, call...” or “Visit our Web site at www....for information materials.”]

Put at the end of the release:

End

Alternatively, put at the end of the release:

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Place “End” or “###” on the left or centered. This lets the reporter or reader know they are at the end of the news release.

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