

Guide for Writing News Releases and Newsletter Articles

News Releases

A news release is a “heads up” letting a news organization, whether TV or newspaper, that an event is occurring. Keep in mind that you should target the release to the appropriate organization and that this is not the only release they will be reading. Releases should have the following info included:

- A basic synopsis, a page or two at most, of the event answering who, what, when, where, how and why
- A picture or two of previous events if you are inviting them to an event, or a few pictures if the event has passed

Notes on what the synopsis should look like and what should be in it, presentation will aid in the news director’s choice of what to cover. Also, it is entirely possible they may use some of the information from your news release but not actually cover the event. Newspapers may print the release instead of sending someone to cover the event or a TV station may mention that the event occurred or is going to happen. In either case, you want the release to follow the basic guidelines that any news article would follow:

- Answer the questions who, what, where, when, why and how
- Be concise in how you answer the afore mentioned questions
- In addition make sure to give some background, only a few facts and context
- Keep context in mind, facts can mean different things given different contexts, clearly define the context that you are using through historical references
- Pay close attention to grammar and sentence structure
- Make sure the information flows logically
- Mix your sentences up, do not use the same structure over and over
- Use common words, though contractions should be avoided
- When you use an uncommon word, define its context concisely in commas right after the first usage
- The same should be said about acronyms, define them regardless of how common they may be
- Repeat important points in different ways
- Repeat important ideas with real world application
- Bold or underline important information
- Always credit sources, i.e. the person or article you are getting you information from, primary sources are always the best sources
- Use quotes often and be absolutely sure the quotes are exactly as the source stated
- Keep first person pronouns out of the article
- Use paragraphs to separate complex ideas
- Follow the chronology of the event
- You can take a little dramatic license I word usage and descriptions to keep the article from droning, although not when quoting a source
- Avoid strongly negative descriptors, especially when describing someone
- Use dialogue to tell the story, don’t just say what happened

- If the source does not want to be identified, do not identify them; use general references unless they do not want what they said to be in the article, in which case you should find another source
- Use lists, bullets or numbers, when summing up related ideas
- Describe events and people in just enough detail to create a basic image
- Do not get hung up on describing every detail, keep to the main subject with a few important details to help your audience understand the subject not to make them an expert
- Be sure that your subjects are clearly defined, do not carry pronouns over from paragraph to paragraph
- Do not invent words, stay away from creating verbs and adverbs from nouns
- I suggest you have your articles proof read by someone not related to the subject matter to gage your writing, if they can understand the article's significance, the article is good
- Stay away from preemptive interpretations
- Keep in mind the difference between commentary, the opinions and interpretations of an event, and news reporting, telling the facts of what happened
- You, as a witness of an event, can write about the event from your perspective though make sure it is clear you are writing commentary
- Never start a sentence with a numeral, it is better to start sentences with the number spelled out
- You can review the *Associated Press Style Book* for more style rules, although by keeping in mind the recommendations provided here should be good enough