

How to Prepare a Press Release

Press releases let you control the narrative on your piece of news and hopefully provide instant exposure to your narrative. They are written like a news article with the most important information at the beginning, quotes from credible sources, and background information toward the end to set the stage on why your information is newsworthy.

Characteristics of a Press Release

Purpose	To share new information or make an official announcement that impacts your organization.
Target Audience	Affiliates of your organization
Document Length	~400 words

WHY ISSUE OR PUBLISH A PRESS RELEASE

You have something new to say or share. For example,

- » A report is published.
- » Someone new joined your Board of Directors or Staff.
- » A new campaign begins.
- » You're responding to breaking news and want to ensure your narrative is part of the current news cycle.
- » You're responding to misinformation about your organization to set the record straight.

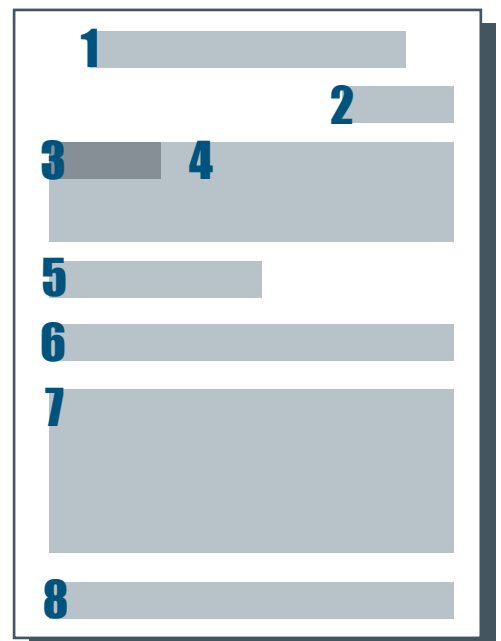
That's it! You simply have something new to share. **Do not** issue a press release just to report that you issued one. Reporters are overwhelmed with pitches as it is, make sure you have something newsworthy to say and worth their time to read.

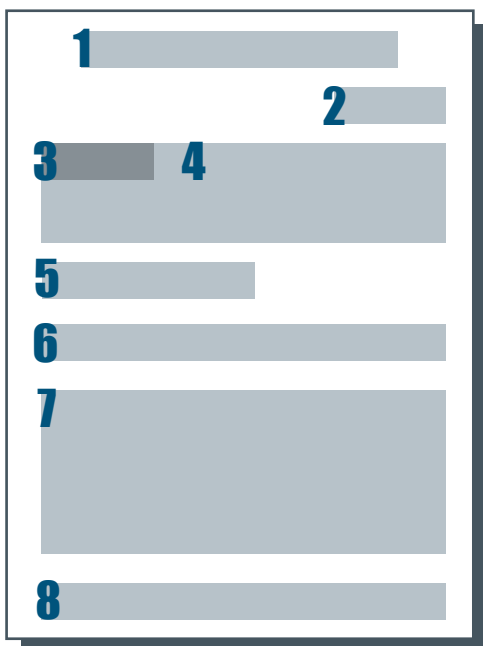
Paid press releases also offer a boost in your Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Ensure you are using relevant keywords in the headline and body of the release. Paid wire services rank very high in search engines, so publishing with them will get your release in newsrooms (not necessarily covered) and high in search ranking.

Whether you self-publish your release or use a wire service, **do** email it directly to key reporters covering your topic/beat in the community your work effects.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN A PRESS RELEASE

1. **Your headline** (in bold, not all capital letters unless acronym) should be attention-grabbing, relevant, and include keywords that someone tracking your issue may have a Google Alert set up to follow. It should be under 75 characters including spaces. Google will only read the first 60-65 characters. Sub-headers (in italics) are optional and can be longer, adding additional context or your brand name if it didn't fit in the header.
2. **Contact for media requests.** If you need to save characters on a paid service, hyperlink the email address in the person's name.
3. **City, state, and date in the opening of the first paragraph.** Be sure to use all capital letters and bold font.





4. **A compelling hook** that says what newsworthy item you are discussing today and why it matters in 2-4 sentences. This is your chance to catch a reporter's attention.
5. **Hyperlinks** that direct the reporters to what you want them to read or cover, such as the report being released, the campaign webpage, or the news you are refuting. If a hyperlink is inappropriate to use, consider using bullet points to highlight approximately four key points.
6. **Compelling quote from a key person.** This is a quote reporters can pull and re-use in their own coverage, so make it count! Avoid industry jargon and slang and instead add emotion.
7. **An explanation on why your news is timely and relevant.** Consider including 1-2 more quotes from key players as relevant.
8. **Boilerplate:** 50 or so words describing the over-arching mission of your organization. Be sure to include **your website's URL** at the end of your release too.

Extra Credit

Use multimedia by embedding a relevant photo or video to entice reporters (and save a step in providing the multimedia to their editor). This will engage their readers and make it more shareable on social media.