

# HOW TO WRITE A BRILLIANT PRESS RELEASE

Your press release is just one of hundreds received by journalists every day. Give yourself the best possible chance of getting your news out by following these 10 tips.

1

## Ask yourself: What's the story - and so what?

- Before you even start writing a press release work out what your story is. Boil it down into a single sentence and then ask yourself - does your story pass the 'so what?' test: is it meaningful and interesting for anyone other than your own charity?
- Just releasing a report is not a story; it's what the report says that is.
- If you're reacting to a news story, make sure your comment is relevant and pushing the story forward.

2

## Consider the aim of the press release

- Have in mind what your press release is trying to achieve: inform people? change behaviour? influence policy?
- It's helpful to include some kind of call to action, whether it's aimed at policy makers, the general public or a particular interest group.

3

## Back up your story

- Do you have case studies, beneficiaries, volunteers, spokespeople lined up and media friendly? Do you have photos or videos to accompany your press release?
- Don't promise what you can't deliver. The best way to annoy a journalist is to offer a spokesperson who turns out to be unavailable or uncommunicative.

4

## Make sure your story is appropriate for the audience

- Are you aiming your story at a broadsheet or tabloid, print or broadcast, local or national, mainstream or trade? This affects your content and tone as well as whether your story is relevant to the audience. You might want to consider different versions for different outlets. Radio and TV shows often follow up print stories giving you the opportunity to react to news later in the day.
- If you're targeting a particular geographical area, make sure your story is relevant to that patch and you have a local case study.
- Research who's written recent articles about your topic area. Use [journalisted](#) to help you. You might want to alert them in advance to your press release with a tweet or quick phone call.

5

## Use your content and layout to sell your story

- Use simple, punchy language. Avoid technical jargon and words like stakeholder.
- At the top of the press release write "Press release from '*name of organisation*'": the title, with the date underneath. Make sure your title grabs the reader's attention. Think of what headline you'd like to see but also

what would appeal to you as a 'normal' reader.

- Your opening line should contain the nub of the story and make the reader want to know more. If you can, include a human angle, what the story means to ordinary people.
- Keep your paragraphs quite short, around 30-35 words. And keep the whole press release to a single page, or it won't get read.
- Try and include who, what, where, when and why in the first paragraph. This may be all that gets read – or used.
- Use subsequent paragraphs to expand on the story with more details and supporting information. Think about the 'what now' angle – what are you proposing?
- Use quotes from relevant contributors: chief executive, volunteers, beneficiaries, experts.
- Include details of a case study to illustrate the impact of your work.
- At the end of the press release, write 'Ends' so journalists know this is the end of the quotable section.

6

## Use the 'notes' section to your advantage

- Have a 'Notes to editors' section at the bottom of the press release. This avoids cluttering up the main body of the press release.
- Include details about any event or interview opportunities, making clear who is available to be interviewed.
- Give additional information about the issue you are highlighting including links to relevant articles.
- Include a brief summary about your organisation and your impact, facts and figures about key issues in your field, and a link to your website.
- Give details for the press contact, including a mobile. Make sure that person is available.
- Transfer any photos or videos onto Dropbox or We Transfer and include the link in this section. This avoids the need for attachments which may make your email too large to deliver.

7

## Increase the chances of your press release being read

- Put the press release in the main body of the email, not as an attachment as that can mean it goes into a journalist's junk mail.
- If you are sending it out to lots of people at the same time, send the release to yourself and blind cc all the other recipients. Otherwise everyone will see who else is receiving it.
- Use the most newsworthy line of your press release as the subject of the email to grab attention. If you have a great case study or interviewee, you can highlight that too.
- Consider an embargo – this is the date and time that the story can be used from. It means news outlets can't run it before. It gives the story added importance and gives you control over the timing. It allows journalists advance warning which is useful for arranging interviews.

8

## Decide if you want to be exclusive - and be time conscious

- Think about whether to offer the press release to multiple media outlets, or as an exclusive to a particularly relevant news outlet. This can be a good way of guaranteeing coverage and building a good relationship. You'll need to phone to discuss this. As with all newsroom contact, avoid calling first thing in the morning when editorial meetings will be happening. Late morning and early afternoon are a good time. Don't call a radio station just before the hourly bulletin. Don't call anyone if a major story is breaking - unless you're part of it.
- Bear in mind that feature writers will usually work three to six weeks in advance so be prepared to talk to them well ahead of time. If your story isn't urgent, ask for the planning desk. If it's for that day or the next day, speak to the newsdesk. If it's a strong story, it can be fitted in at short notice.

9

## Be organised about who you're sending it to

- Build up a list of media contacts. Personal contacts are best, but also include general news desks. It's always good to include the [Press Association](#), and [relevant journalists](#) there.
- Check on news websites who's posting stories about your topic - and send it to them.
- You can use a free press service to help distribute your press release. The [Media Trust](#) recommends either using [Pressat](#) or [Relevant Now](#).
- Post it on your website and tweet the website link. Also tweet directly at journalists you know and ones who are tweeting about the topic, including radio programmes running phone-ins. Look for any relevant hashtags (eg. [#mentalhealth](#) [#domesticabuse](#)) and tweet to those people too.
- Follow up the press release by calling key recipients and asking if they need further information or if it's in their diary. Often the individual you've sent it to isn't working that day or it isn't picked up by the general newsdesk. So it's worth calling to find the most appropriate person. Don't be offended/rude if they're not interested.

10

## Amplify the impact of coverage you manage to secure

- If your press release results in a radio or TV interview - tweet that it's happening so people can tune in, live tweet it as it's happening, then tweet any links to listen again and post them on your website. It's useful having an [audioboom](#) (for radio) and [youtube](#) (for TV and videos) account so you can have keep a record of the interviews.
- For print interviews or quotes – tweet the quote and link to the article and post the article on your website

## Further information

[Communications and the media](#)

[How to generate news](#)

[How to develop a constructive relationship with journalists](#)

[How to develop communications](#)

## Contributors



- [Giselle Green](#)



- [Mark Barratt](#)



- [Giselle Green](#)



- [Debbie Valentine](#)



- [Jack Garfinkel](#)

▪  Zoe Amar

▪  Myles Kunzli

▪  TJS

▪  jai

Page last edited Jan 23, 2018 — [History](#)

Help us to improve this page – [give us feedback](#).

