How to Write a News Release

Print on Library Letterhead

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Month Day, Year

Contact: Name
Library, Phone number
Email address

HEADLINE, BOLD TYPE, CENTERED

City, State—Begin the release with a heading that includes "For Immediate Release," the date, a contact person (and title) and a phone number, as shown above. Space down a couple of lines and write the headline in bold all-caps.

The headline should be a newspaper-style headline. Most newspaper headlines are, roughly, complete sentences and are written in the present tense (sometimes in the future tense if you refer to something that has not yet happened) Generally, the headline summarizes the story's main point. Whenever logically possible, mention your organization's name in the headline.

Begin the text with a dateline and a dash (for example, "El Paso, Texas—"). Datelines give the location of the story. Build a strong hook into the first paragraph with the most compelling information first. Usually, this hook includes concise, specific, newsworthy information that has a clear local angle. The first paragraph must induce the reader to continue reading. Ask yourself the standard who, what, where, when, why and how questions. Releases typically include quotes attributed to library spokespeople. The media may pull these quotes verbatim and include them in their stories.

<u>REMEMBER: A news release is an objective news story or announcement, not an obviosly promotional document. It must sound as if an unbiased reporter wrote it, and include no unattributed opinions. Also remember to include key messages within the release.</u>

If the release is more than one page, write "-more-" at the bottom of each page but the last. Beginning with page two, place a condensed version of the release's headline and the page

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number in the upper right corner. At the end of the release, put "###" to indicate the end of the document. The entire release should usually be no more than two pages. Make it shorter if possible.

-more-

Send all news releases to specific contact people if possible. Find out who the appropriate reporters and editors are at each media outlet. For newspapers, you'll typically want to send information to the editor or community calendar editor. For television or radio stations, you'll want to send information to an assignment editor or news director. Get to know the media in your area. Create a list that includes contact information for all the print, television and radio news outlets in your community. However, remember that contacts can change quickly – ideally you should call and double check before you distribute information.

Most commonly, releases are e-mailed. Paste the text of the release into the e-mail because the media will not typically open attachments. If you are sending a complete media kit, it is customary to mail the information or attach a PDF to an e-mail. It is particularly important to have specific and correct contacts if you are going through the expense of mailing a complete media kit.

The last paragraph of every release should be a "boilerplate" about your program/library. A "boilerplate" is a basic brief statement that describes your program/library and acknowledges its supporters. For example, your boilerplate might say: The Richland Public Library is a proud participant in the Washington Library Association's Statewide Summer Reading Program. Summer Reading is free and open to all youth in our community. We appreciate our sponsors: Wells Fargo, Washington Public Broadcasting, our local independent grocer, and others.

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