

How to Write a Press Release for Effective Media Outreach

What is a Media Advisory and Press Release?

A press release provides information to various sectors of the media concerning a newsworthy topic or event. It should be short and should catch the attention of the news editor. They are mostly sent by email.

The main difference between a Media Advisory and a Press Release is your purpose for sending it.

A **Media Advisory** is a brief, one-page informative invitation for media attendance at a particular event; while a **Press Release** is more like an article, that includes specific facts and quotes related to the topic with a goal of generating interest and awareness of your key issue by local or national media outlets. Sometimes a press release can, however, announce an event but it can also highlight other topics.

How Can I Use a Media Advisory or Press Release to Elevate an Issue?

Your press release will help your group in several ways. It can:

- Announce an event, schedule, study, campaign, workshop, or election of new leaders
- Tell people *why* you think this is newsworthy and of importance
- Show your perspective/expertise on the issue/topic
- Increase the visibility of your leaders or advocates (if quoted in the release)
- Remind people of what your group does and how active in the community you are
- Allow you to highlight or summarize a report

Before you start thinking a press release is going to solve all your publicity woes, now is a good time to note that by itself, a press release isn't going to get you a lot of media attention. The average reporter or editor gets more press releases than he or she could possibly use. Your press release should be just one part of your broader media outreach and campaign.

Press Release Process:

1. Identify news to share (could be report release and findings, milestone, state event/campaign launch)
2. Get up to date on news coverage about your issue so you can frame it to be timely and to stand out
3. Develop press list
4. Draft release
5. Distribute release to press list, share via social media, and post on your website
6. Follow up with media to gauge interest

How To Write A Press Release:

1. **HEADLINE:** Begin with an eye-catching headline. Keep it short and to the point. You can include a subhead too, which expands on your headline in a few more words.
2. **WRITING STYLE:** Write in an “inverted pyramid” style. Place the most important points — the who, where, what, when, why, and how — at the beginning, followed by the details.
 - a. Beginning is where your first sentence is your **HOOK** that is timely, engaging, and relevant
 - b. You want to make sure you **lead with your advocacy goal** and how it ties with relevant issues in the media now
 - c. Throughout the rest of the press release talk through the details such as the **outcomes/benefits** as well as the **main findings** and be sure to **add quotes** from either students, teachers, or advocates
3. **GRAMMAR:** Write in the present tense, third person, and use action verbs.
4. **QUOTES:** Add a relevant quote or two from involved parties. This adds a personal touch, which reporters want, especially from those directly affected.
5. **TIMING:** Try to time the release when the issue or event will be a top story for the media or try to tie your issue into one of the big stories of the day.
6. **DATE AND CITY:** This lets the editor know your issue is relevant and current.
7. **FOLLOW-UP:** Follow up the day after you send the press release to ask if the journalist would like an interview. Don’t push this, as the media receive a large number of press releases, but make it clear that you are available to them.

Tips For Writing a Press Release:

- Write as a reporter (third person)—not from a first-person perspective.
- Provide pronunciation guides for unusual names
- Include contact information for people who can answer questions about the release.
- Type “# # #” centered below the last line. This signals the end of the release
- Most newspapers have an email address for receiving press releases on their contact page
- Send your press release in the text of an email (not as an attachment) to all relevant newspapers. This will ensure you have the broadest reach possible and that you do not favor any one newspaper
- Use Quotes – you can list a couple different quotes from involved parties so journalists can choose which one they like best for their “human perspective angle”; make sure that quotes are additive and don’t just repeat the content you have already included
- Interactive Elements (this is optional): link videos or links to other sources or infographics
- Keep it simple and brief: Use approx. 500 words (one page.) If you do need another page (and no more), type “-more-”
 - at the bottom center of page one
- Share data and statistics and be sure to verify and include source/citation

What Does a Press Release Look Like?

EXAMPLE #1 TEMPLATE:

{PLACE LOGO HERE}

For Immediate Release Contact:

Month Day, Year

Full Name

Office #

Cell #

Email

Website

THE HEADLINE GOES HERE AND CAN BE UP TO TWO LINES LONG, BOLD, AND IN ALL CAPS. IT SHOULD CAPTURE THE FRAME OF THE NEWS AND HAVE A SENSE OF DRAMA.

The subhead can provide more context and be up to two lines long.

CITY, STATE—"The Lead" paragraph should serve as a summary paragraph that communicates the most important components and outlines the issue in a way that captures attention. This paragraph should not attempt to explain everything you want to share.

Each remaining paragraph should contain information in descending order of importance. The most riveting information should be provided at the top of the press release.

"Ed Trust recommends that one or two quotes be included in the press release from key members of the state team or state coalitions," said Nicolle Grayson, senior director of communications for The Education Trust.

The press release should contain a short paragraph that explains any relevant historical/data background information that the press may need.

"The quotes should be direct, passionate, and emphasize the most important aspect of the news being shared in the release."

If the news identifies other organizations or individuals the final paragraph should briefly outline who they are and their role in the news.

###

(This indicates the conclusion of the press release)

Boilerplate language goes here. It is a general description of the organization or coalition should be included following the conclusion of the press release in italics.

About EdTrust

EdTrust is committed to advancing policies and practices to dismantle the racial and economic barriers embedded in the American education system. Through our research and advocacy, Ed Trust improves equity in education from preschool through college, engages diverse communities dedicated to education equity and justice and increases political and public will to build an education system where students will thrive. Learn more at edtrust.org.

EXAMPLE TEMPLATE #2:

- **Logo** – optional

- **Contact Information**
- **Release Date**
 - This notes when you want your release to be published or covered in media outlets. If it is ready to be distributed right away (which is recommended) include “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” at the top.
- **Headline**
 - Put at the top center of the release. Keep it brief, catchy, and typed centered, in 14-point, Times New Roman font
 - Note that the headline should reflect the “why” of your release; why is it important for media to care about and cover?
- **Subheader**
 - This is centered under the headline and no more than 120 characters (not words), this can further elaborate on the headline
 - Should be in 12-point font and italicized
- **Place Stamp and Date**
 - Both location and date should be bolded and should look like this:
 - City, State. (Month Day, Year)-
- **Content of Press Release**
 - **First Body Paragraph** – answers who, what, when, where, why, and how of the press release and to give an overall summary or quick picture so the media outlet can decide if they want to cover your story. Also, make sure to include the “angle” or why this story is newsworthy
 - **Body Paragraphs** – should give more detail about why the story is important, using facts and quotes; note: you can use graphs and statistics, but make sure to use evidence-based and factual research as well as include quotes that add to story
- **Boilerplate**
 - This is the final paragraph and is basically your organization’s “about” section that appears on the very bottom so you can provide a bit more information about your organization or group
 - You can also provide a link to your website and social media accounts
 - End with “###” centered at the bottom of the page.

Additional Sources:

- **Tips on Preparing a Press Release:** <http://www.idhr.org/publications/media-and-development/Tips%20on%20Preparing%20a%20Press%20Release.pdf>
- **NAEYC Press Release Template:** <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/press-release-template>
- **How to Write an Effective Press Release:** <https://www.umass.edu/pep/sites/default/files/pressreleasesmediaadvisory.pdf>

Other Examples of Press Releases:

- **EWA:** <https://ewa.org/members-news/press-releases>

- **K-12 Dive:** <https://www.k12dive.com/press-release/>
- **Ed Trust Press Release Examples:**
 - <https://edtrust.org/press-release/faculty-diversity-plays-a-central-role-in-college-completion/>
 - <https://edtrust.org/press-release/advocates-call-on-legislators-and-healey-driscoll-administration-to-act-on-board-of-higher-education-recommendations-and-analysis/>
 - <https://edtrust.org/press-release/school-districts-that-serve-students-of-color-receive-significantly-less-funding/>
 - <https://edtrust.org/press-release/more-than-a-third-of-georgia-students-do-not-attend-a-school-with-a-leader-of-color/>

Where Can I Learn More?

- <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/press-releases/main>
- <https://www.recoveryvoices.com/write-a-media-advisory-and-press-release/>
- <https://cpj.ca/writing-a-press-release/>