THE *Writing* CENTER, INC.

How to Write Press Releases

Every press release must have a specific purpose, be directed to a specific audience, and be part of an overall public relations plan. To ensure that your news releases reach print, follow these guidelines:

1. **Send the release to a specific individual.** Call to find out the appropriate department (the arts, business, education, environment, finance, health, regional, technology, etc.) and the appropriate editor/contact. Ask about format, deadlines, and preferred method of delivery.

2. With your organization's logo, with all pages labeled as a "NEWS RELEASE" or "PRESS RELEASE" with the city and date, and with the end indicated with "-30-" or "###":
   - **Provide the release date and contact information** (name, title, organization, land address, email address, and phone number) so that editors can follow up if necessary.
   - **Type the headline in full capital letters, centered**. Give the essence of the release. Avoid "creative" headlines that may annoy or confuse the editor. Stick to the subject (the organization, person, product, or service publicized) and the main point of the release. You can use a subheadline to describe the headline in more detail.

3. Because editors frequently shorten releases, **eliminate any wordiness,** and to ensure that vital information is not cut, **use the pyramid formula** (moving from most important information to more detailed information):
   - In the first paragraph of the release—the introduction, tell readers everything they *need* to know. Lead with the best, most important information. Tell WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY. Save the background details for later paragraphs.
   - In the next section—the body, tell them what you would *like* them to know. In the final section—the background, include standard information about your organization.
   - As allowed, provide links to further detail on your organization's website.

4. **Don't try to sell anything**. Most publications won't run a news release that's full of blatant self-serving sales hype. Avoid glowing descriptions. Let your facts prove your responsiveness to customers, attention to quality, state-of-the-art employee-friendly workplace, concern for your community and the environment, etc.

5. **Gear language to your reading audience.** Edit the release to eliminate all unnecessary words and to ensure that all words necessary for meaning have been included. Avoid using undefined technical jargon with non-technical readers. If necessary, attach a separate sheet with technical information or include a technical summary at the bottom of the page.

6. **Humanize the press release with quotations, and verify all quotations with their source.** Double-check that quotations, ideally powerful statements from credible leaders, support your key message, emphasize and summarize your main point.

7. **Check facts,** including all numbers, against their source. **Edit and proofread** to ensure succinct, flawless copy that builds credibility.

8. **Re-use the release on your community's and your organization's websites.**