

Top Ten Tips for Writing a Press Release

All journalists are pushed for time. They are inundated with press releases and other stories so you have to try to do two things. First, make it stand out. Some people use brightly coloured paper but we have in mind the actual content. For example, make sure you are telling a story that involves human interest, conflict, celebrity or something else that you regularly read about in papers or hear on the news. Secondly, make it easy to use by minimising the work they have to do on it by writing in their style and according to their needs.

We apply 29 'rules' to writing our media releases. These are the key ones.

1. Keep the headline simple and factual (the sub-editors like to use their own puns and dramatic language).
2. The first sentence should contain the information Who What Where & When but not necessarily in that order.
3. The second sentence should say Why.
4. Remember that the publication or broadcaster may only use (or even read) your first paragraph so the first or second sentence must contain the most interesting/important fact. After that, put the facts in descending order of importance and gradually introduce more details.
5. Keep sentences short.
6. Use simple, lively language and avoid jargon and clichés.
7. Use the active voice ('he did this', not 'this was done by him').
8. Avoid negatives- there is always a danger that someone along the way will leave out the word 'not' by accident and totally change the meaning.
9. "You must use direct quotes and the sooner the better," said Paul Lewis.
10. Give a contact name, postal address, email address and phone number at the end and make it clear if this is NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

Of course, getting journalists to leave the office to cover your event calls for a far higher level of inventiveness and persuasion!