



Anatomy of a news release

The news release is one of the oldest tools in public relations. Some say it's dead – there are so many other ways to package news today, after all.

But the news release is not dead at all. Using it well requires understanding how newsrooms work. At its best, a news release is your effort to write your own news story. If a news outlet uses your news release verbatim, it is a signal you've done it right.

Print journalists use an “inverted pyramid” style in composition. It loads all the most important information to the front of the story. This is done traditionally for two reasons. The first is because editors needed the flexibility to cut a story to fit a space in a newspaper. The second, and more relevant today, is because the audience has a short attention span. You'll want them to have your essential message within the first four paragraphs.

When crafting a news release, here are the most important elements.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

Contact (name, email and phone)

HEADLINE (10-15 words)

SUBDECK (Optional sub-headline, one short sentence supporting the headline)

LEAD PARAGRAPH (One sentence that tells the heart of your entire story: who, what, when, where, why. This and the headline will be what draws a person to want to read your release. Make it good)

SUPPORT PARAGRAPH (Information that is also important, but not enough to make the lead)

QUOTE (Make people in quotes say something interesting, inspiring and mission-oriented. Do not make them say statistics or data)

DATA & STATS PARAGRAPHS

HISTORIC / BACKGROUND PARAGRAPHS

CLOSING PARAGRAPH (A final quote to tie up the story)

WEBSITE LINK (give audience a way to learn more about your story or your organization)

###