

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

Here's how to write a press release for newspapers, radio or television. For a newspaper, direct the release to an editor or reporter that covers business, health, lifestyle or local news, depending on what your news is about. Identify the reporter by calling the newspaper.

Press releases are easy to write, but they do have a standard form. Here's what they should look like.

The Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Type this under your letterhead in the upper left-hand margin. (If you are sending it via email, display your company name and logo near the top of the page.)

Contact information:

Name

Title

Telephone number (use a number where they can reach you quickly)

Email address

Title:

Use the headline to get your reader's attention.

Here's two examples.

“Jane Doe Massage, Inc. Lends Support to March of Dimes Walk-a-Thon”

“Jane Doe, LMP, RN Offers Free Presentation on Massage for Your Child”

Dateline:

Where you are, and when you are sending the release. For example:

Smithfield, WA. May 21, 2007.

Lead Paragraph:

Cover the five W's: who, what, when, where and why. Newspapers edit from the bottom of the article up, so give the essential information first. You could even list these items, rather than using paragraph form, for example:

Who: Jane Doe Massage, Inc.

What: Free Presentation on Therapeutic Massage and How it Helps

When: June 15, 2007, 1 PM

Where: Smithfield Herbs & Garden

Why: An opportunity for everyone to learn how massage can benefit them, and receive a free chair massage.

Body:

Here's some guidelines.

- Be brief.
- Share your credentials, experience or other interesting history (worked with Alzheimer's patients, or first massage business in town, or your tenure as the president of your local professional association).

- Add a quote — from a client, an expert in your field or...you! Have the quote describe something exciting or unique about what you're doing. For example, "Many folks with fibromyalgia are reporting that massage is reducing their pain, helping them sleep and making it possible to resume their lives."
- If possible, emphasize the benefits or service, not your business. For example, if you are announcing a presentation you are giving, highlight how people in your community can benefit.
- Don't use a lot of adjectives or exclamation points, and avoid jargon and exaggeration.
- Go for facts that busy editors can quickly pick out.

Conclusion:

Summarize and/or add last items. Here's an example:

To register for the presentation, Therapeutic Massage and How it Helps, call Jane Doe Massage, Inc. at 222-2222.

Make it Professional

Send the press release two to three weeks before an event. For the most professional look, double space on letterhead — and keep it to one page.

Send a black-and-white photo of yourself along with your press release. It will be more likely to be used if it shows you doing something, for example, talking to clients, presenting to a group, or giving a massage. Be sure the faces in the photo are showing. You might also include your brochure and business card, as well as brochures or a newsletter on the topic of interest.

Tip: If the press release involves a specific event, get photos taken at the event. Then the next time you participate in the event or give a presentation, you will have photos ready to include in your release.

Follow-Up

If you haven't heard from your targeted editor or representative within a period of time, say a week, give them a call. Be polite, and tell them that you want to make sure they received your press release. Remember, journalists are often up against deadlines, but if they seem to have a minute, ask them what kinds of stories or angles they are looking for in the area of bodywork or whatever your area of interest is. Ask if someone would be interested in interviewing you for a story. Always be prepared with handouts and resource lists to help reporters in writing an article.

Remember not to send press releases too often to the same journalist. Make sure you have something of true interest to the community — then follow the guidelines, and you'll be on your way!

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