

Clutter also occurs when a writer tries to put too many of the five Ws and H in the lead paragraph. The solution is to put only the most important element of the story in the lead paragraph. The other Ws, or the H, can be woven into the succeeding paragraphs. Here are examples of leads that emphasize only one element:

- Who: Recording artist Lisa Atkinson will lead a sing-along and entertain preschool children.
- What: "Fire, Earth, and Water," a major exhibit of pre-Columbian sculpture from the Land Collection, opens Friday.

## tips FOR SUCCESS

### 10 Classic News Release Mistakes

Alan Caruba, a public relations consultant and publicist for three decades, has prepared this list of 10 "Classic News Release Mistakes":

1. **Failure to provide a headline.** "It's a news story and headlines articulate the theme. Subheadlines, too, are useful."
2. **Boiler-plate.** "A first paragraph that jams in the client's name, their title, the company, its location, etc., while ignoring the primary theme of the release, kills it."
3. **Spelling and grammatical errors.** "Very harmful to any release because it suggests its writer is either uneducated or the release was not proofread."
4. **Punctuation errors.** "Because editors and reporters, as well as broadcast news personnel, make their living writing, these mistakes are 'red flags,' raising doubts about the source of the release."
5. **Hyperbole.** "The word from which we get the term 'hype' in which ordinary things are given extraordinary qualities. It's instantaneously recognizable, creating barriers to credibility."
6. **Documentation.** "Failure to attribute data to verifiable, independent sources diminishes credibility."
7. **Contacts.** "Failure to provide the names, phone and/or fax numbers of informed, articulate spokesperson(s) renders a release useless."
8. **Too long.** "The best releases are the briefest. Too much initial data can be a turn-off. If more is wanted, it will be requested."
9. **Localize.** "Whenever possible, 'localize' the release."
10. **Be accessible at all times.** "The best news release makes the media come to you. Opportunity ceases after the third ring of your phone." ■