

Rules for Writing a News Release

All news releases should be “news centered” according to Schubert Communications, a Pennsylvania public relations firm. Lisa Barbadora, director of public relations and marketing content for Schubert, gives these rules for writing news releases:

- Use short, succinct headlines and subheads to highlight main points and pique interest. They should not simply be a repeat of the information in the lead-in paragraph.
- Do not use generic words and phrases such as “the leading provider” or “world-class” to position your company. Be specific, use phrases such as “with annual revenues of.”
- Do not describe products using phrases such as “unique” or “total solution.” Use specific terms or examples to demonstrate the product’s distinctness.
- Use descriptive and creative words to grab an editor’s attention, but make sure they are accurate and not exaggerated.
- Do not highlight the name of your company or product in the headline of a news release if it is not highly recognized. If you are not a household name, focus on the news instead.
- Tell the news. Focus on how your announcement affects your industry and lead with that rather than overtly promoting your product or company.
- Critique your writing by asking yourself, “who cares?” Why should readers be interested in this information?
- Do not throw the whole kitchen sink into a release. Better to break your news into several releases if material is lengthy.
- Do not use lame quotes. Write like someone is actually talking—eliminate the “corporatese” that editors love to ignore. Speak with pizzazz to increase your chances of being published.
- Target your writing. Create two different tailored releases that will go out to different types of media rather than a general release that isn’t of great interest to either group.
- Look for creative ways to tie your announcement in to current news or trends.
- Write simply. Use contractions, write in active voice, be direct, avoid paired words like “clear and simple,” and incorporate common action-oriented phrases to generate excitement. Sentences should be no longer than 34 words.
- Follow the *Associated Press Stylebook* and specific publications’ editorial standards for dates, technical terms, abbreviations, punctuation, spellings, capitalization, etc.
- Do not use metaphors unless they are used to paint a clearer picture for the reader.
- Do not overdo it. It’s important to write colorfully, to focus on small specific details, to include descriptions of people, places, and events, but do not write poetry when you want press.
- Do not be formulaic in your news release writing. Not every release must start with the name of the company or product. Break out of the mold to attract media attention.
- Do not expect editors to print your entire release. Important information should be in the first two paragraphs.
- Make it clear how your announcement is relevant for the editors’ readers. ■