

**Public Relations Writing  
Midterm Exam Study Guide  
Spring 2012  
Exam Date: Friday, March 16**



**MIDTERM EXAM—COVERING CHAPTERS 1-8**

**There are three parts to this Midterm Exam:**

- **Copy editing a news release for AP style, typos and grammar. This part will be done in class on Wednesday, March 14 (five points)**
- **News Release, Media Advisory, and Pitch Letter writing—write these three communications pieces from the handouts given in class. These are due on Wednesday, March 14. This part must be turned in when you take the test. The three pieces will be worth five points each.**
  - **News Release: Department head change at hospital**
  - **Pitch Letter: Seeking media attention to Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April**
  - **Media Alert: Civil War historian to speak at local library**
- **Written Test—This will be given on Friday, March 16. Test will consist of true/false, multiple choice, terms/definitions, short answer**

**This study guide highlights the material from each chapter that should be closely studied. Reviewing the Power Points for each chapter is also recommended.**

**Chapter 1, “Getting Organized for Writing”**

- ✓ **Public Relations four core components: research, planning/action, communication, and evaluation—the RACE process (p. 1)**
- ✓ **Understand differences between PR “strategies” and “tactics” as shown in new cosmetics line launch example (pages 1-2)**
- ✓ **What is meant by PR writers as “communication technicians”? (p. 2)**
- ✓ **Be able to list the Five Basic Skills for Success in Public Relations (p. 3)**
- ✓ **What is meant by a PR writer’s purpose being advocacy, not objectivity? (4)**
- ✓ **Review “Philips Roving Reporter” video magazine example of how an employee publication supports corporate objectives (p. 4)**
- ✓ **What are meant by “channels” and what channels might a PR professional use to reach desired audiences? (5-6)**
- ✓ **What is the significance of the Associated Press Stylebook to PR writers? (10)**
- ✓ **Sentence length is important to consider when writing PR-oriented material. What are some of the views about appropriate sentence length/number of words? (p. 21)**
- ✓ **Pages 26-31 cover 10 kinds of “Errors to Avoid” in communications writing. Understand them and be able to recognize examples of, for example, redundancies, hype, bias and the other problem areas described**

## **Chapter 2, “Becoming a Persuasive Writer”**

- ✓ **Define “persuasion” in a public relations sense (p. 34)**
- ✓ **Understand the four parts of the basic communication process from a PR perspective: sender, message, channel, and receiver (p. 35-36)**
- ✓ **The importance of “publics” and “stakeholders” (p. 36)**
- ✓ **Know these terms and concepts from the section, “Factors in Persuasive Writing” (p. 42-47):**
  - **Channeling**
  - **Passive audiences**
  - **Active Audiences**
  - **Source credibility**
  - **Transfer**
  - **Semantics**
- ✓ **Propaganda—its definition (p. 55)**
- ✓ **What is meant by the term “spin doctor”? (p. 56)**
- ✓ **Know what the TARES ethics test is, as far as what the letters stand for and mean—from Tips for Success (p. 57)**

## **Chapter 3, “Avoiding Legal Hassles”**

- ✓ **Review “A Sampling of Legal Problems” (p. 61-62)**
- ✓ **Review the five Ways PR personnel can become “co-conspirators” with other officials in illegal activities (bullet points, p. 62)**
- ✓ **Review General Motors’ defamation lawsuit against NBC over a “Dateline” report (p. 63)**
- ✓ **Review how a company blog or newsletter can lead to an employee lodging a defamation suit (p. 63)**
- ✓ **In libel or defamation cases, what is meant by the “Fair Comment” defense? (p. 64)**
- ✓ **Define “Puffery” in the PR, marketing and advertising context (p. 65)**
- ✓ **Review bullet points on things to consider when writing about employee activities for company publications and online communications (p. 66)**
- ✓ **Regarding Media Inquiries About Employees, review what information employers, in general, should provide to the media/should not provide (67-8)**
- ✓ **If you work for a company and have your own personal blog, what types of things in your blog can get you in hot water with your employer? (p. 68-9)**
- ✓ **Review “Guidelines for Using Copyrighted Material” (p. 74)**
- ✓ **Review “Copyright Issues on the Internet” (p. 75)**
- ✓ **Review the three basic guidelines for using trademarks (p. 76 bullet points)**
- ✓ **Understand the legal concept of “Misappropriation of Personality” (p. 81-2)**

## **Chapter 4, “Finding and Making News”**

- ✓ **“Effective publicists need to know three things.” What are they? (p. 91)**
- ✓ **What are considered the “four obstacles” to generating coverage in the news media? (p. 91)**
- ✓ **Media Gatekeepers—who are they, why are they important to PR pros? (92)**

- ✓ Be familiar with the eight traditional news values and why PR pros should know about these (92-101)
- ✓ Creating news—what is meant by a pseudo-event? (p. 103)
- ✓ Be able to list several of the “32 Ways to Create News for Your Organization” (p. 106)

#### Chapter 5, “Writing the News Release”

- ✓ Why is the news or press release considered the “backbone” of almost every publicity plan? (p. 118)
- ✓ What are the three things needed to make your releases stand out from the pack of releases that editors receive daily? (p. 118)
- ✓ Review The Value of News Releases—three key values (p. 119)
- ✓ Review The 6 Basic Questions you should consider when planning to issue a news release (p. 119-120)
- ✓ Why should news releases follow the Associated Press style? (p. 122)
- ✓ Review the Types of News Releases (p. 122-124)
- ✓ What does it mean if a news release is “embargoed”? (p. 125)
- ✓ Be able to list several of the 10 Classic News Release Mistakes (p. 129)
- ✓ What’s meant by news releases following journalism’s “inverted pyramid” structure? (p. 131-2)
- ✓ Many releases contain “boilerplate” at the end. What does this mean? (133)
- ✓ Many corporate news releases also contain “safe harbor” wording at the end. What is the purpose of this? [Go to Answers.com](#) and search “Safe Harbor” (see definition No. 3) [Safe Harbor example \(in a news release\)](#)
- ✓ Review “Rules for Writing a News Release” (p. 135)
- ✓ What are “Smart Media Releases” or SMRs? (p. 137-139)?

#### Chapter 6, “Preparing Fact Sheets, Advisories, Media Kits, and Pitches”

- ✓ What are some of the printed or online materials that can go into a press or media kit? (p. 141)
- ✓ What kind of information about a company or organization may go into a Fact Sheet? (p. 141-2)
- ✓ How does a Media Advisory or Alert differ from a regular news release? (p. 145)
- ✓ What are Electronic Media Kits (EMKs) and why have they become so popular? (p. 149)
- ✓ What are some of the approaches and other things to keep in mind when “Pitching a Story” to a member of the news media? (p. 152-154)
- ✓ Why should careful wording be chosen for the Subject Line when pitching a story to a media member via e-mail? (p. 158)
- ✓ What are some of the thoughts in the book about the best ways to “Follow Up on Your Pitch”? (p. 160)

#### Chapter 7, “Creating News Features and Op-Ed”

- ✓ What are the benefits of putting together and distributing a Feature News Release versus a regular news release? (p. 163-4)

- ✓ What is meant by “Service Journalism”? (p. 164)
- ✓ Be able to define “Infographics” (p. 179)
- ✓ Review and be able to list the four categories of print- style (not broadcast) Placement Opportunities given on pages 180-181
- ✓ What is an “Op-Ed” and what are the benefits of placing such pieces in the print media? (p. 181)
- ✓ Review “Writing the ‘Perfect’ Op-Ed” tips (p. 183)
- ✓ Reviews the section on Letters to the Editor- how can they be used PR-wise? And review the letter to the editor guidelines (p. 184-5)

#### **Chapter 8, “Selecting Publicity Photos and Graphics”**

- ✓ Why are Publicity Photos desirable to have and get used by the media? (188)
- ✓ Why do some or many submitted photos get rejected by editors? (p. 189-190)
- ✓ Review section on contracts with photographers (p. 198)
- ✓ What are some of the ethical considerations as far as retouching or “photo-shopping” photographs? (p. 199-200)

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