

# News Release

## Tips on writing a news release

Local publicity can be useful for your group. News of your successes or activities can let people know what you are doing, and help you to get new members. Radio or press coverage can also be useful if you are campaigning on a particular issue, and want to draw attention to your concerns.

Journalists are busy. If you can provide them with a well written story, at the right time, with pictures if you have them, there is a good chance that they will use it.

This sheet gives tips on how to write a good news release.

## Getting the content right

When people read newspapers they do not read everything. They scan through, then read the beginning of a story. If they are interested they will carry on reading. If not, they will skip to the next story. To grab their attention you need to put the key information in your opening paragraph.

This is often called the 5 W's.

**WHAT** – what is being done?

**WHO** – who will be doing it?

**WHEN** – when will they be doing it?

**WHERE** – where will they be doing it?

**WHY** – why will they be doing it?

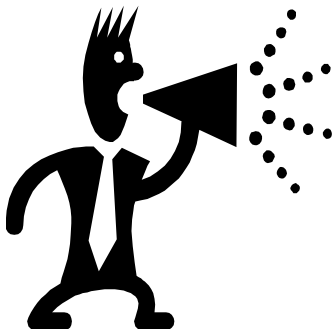


You can then fill in the rest of the information in your following paragraphs, following these guidelines:

- ★ Keep it simple, and concentrate on the main points.
- ★ Keep it brief - one A4 sheet is best.
- ★ Keep it waffle free. Try to write sentences of no more than 10 words. Try not to put more than one idea in each sentence.
- ★ Use everyday language. *Don't* use technical words, abbreviations, legalistic or academic jargon.
- ★ Use direct language - e.g. 'Mary Jones said' not 'the meeting was then addressed by Mary Jones'.
- ★ Make sure your story is about people - how will people benefit from what you are doing?

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*The Resource Centre has computers you can use to type and print out your news release, and to produce headed paper.*



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- ★ Include a quote from a named person. Quotes make it lively and interesting, and can be used to express opinions. Make sure you have covered the 5 W's before you put in the quote.
- ★ Make it active. 'The petition will be presented to our MP ...' instead of: 'It is hoped that when we have sufficient names on our petition we will be able to arrange to present it to our MP...'
- ★ Work on your angle. Why will local people be interested in your story?
- ★ Get your facts right. If you aren't sure - check.
- ★ Always give names and contact numbers. Make sure someone will be available in the evening as well as daytime.
- ★ At the bottom of the news release give details of any photo opportunities with times and places. Ask them to come when your event will look its best, or when most people will be there.
- ★ If you want to include some background information put it right at the end of the news release with the heading 'Notes for editors'

## Setting it out right

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If your news release is clear and easy to read it is more likely to get used. You can send your news release by post or by email, however, there are certain standard ways of setting it out, and it is worth following these.

- ★ Write 'Press Release' in Bold at the top of the page
- ★ Date your news release
- ★ Give your story a short, snappy headline. Type this in bold
- ★ Use double spacing and wide margins
- ★ Write 'ENDS' at the end of the release, and then put contact details (in bold) photo opportunities / details and any notes for the editors
- ★ Ask somebody to check and proofread your press release to make sure it is clear without any grammatical or spelling mistakes

### *If you are going to post or deliver your news release*

- ★ Use headed paper
- ★ Only use one side of the paper and end each page with a complete paragraph.
- ★ Write 'more follows' at the bottom of each page which has a page following
- ★ Number your pages

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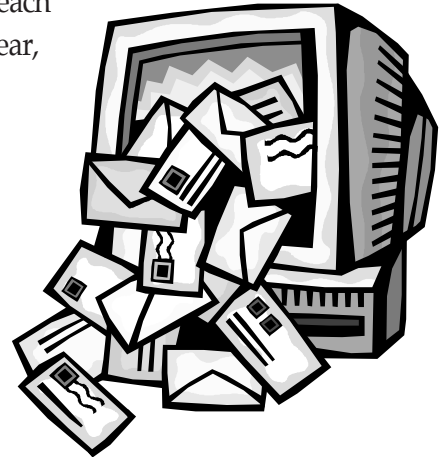
*For details of local press contacts  
see our 'Media Contacts'  
information sheet*

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## Sending your news release

Most news releases are now sent by email. News desks receive hundreds of emails each day so you need to make sure yours is clear, easy for the journalist to use, and stands out.

- ★ Put the heading of your news release in the subject line of the email
- ★ Attach the news release to your email AND paste it into the main body of the email
- ★ If you have a good quality photograph save it as a JPEG and attach it to the email. Provide a caption for it at the bottom of your email.



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## Getting the timing right

Think about when you want the media to receive your news release.

- ★ You can send two news releases: one in advance, and one after the event, with details of what has happened. If you are lucky, you may get coverage twice.
- ★ With an advance news release send it to the News Desk a week or so before the event. Bear in mind publication days if it is a weekly paper.
- ★ If you are sending a news release after an event it *has* to be done on the day. It won't be news in 2 days time.
- ★ Papers, TV and radio all have deadlines, which they won't break for your story.
- ★ If speed is important, email or fax the news release.
- ★ If you want to let the press know in advance about an event, but don't want the event publicised until a certain date, you can use an 'embargo'. This means writing 'embargoed until 3pm, 25th December' on your news release. Don't use this unless you really need to.

# News Release

*For information on radio and press interviews see our 'Radio Interviews' information sheet*

## Getting your response right

Follow up your news release with a phone call to the news desk.

- ★ If possible, read over your news release and any background information first. Think about the 2 or 3 main points you want to get across.
- ★ Be polite but firm.
- ★ Introduce yourself: "Hello, I am *(name)* from *(organisation)*. I emailed a press release to you on *(date)* about *(subject)*. Please could I speak to the journalist who is covering this story."
- ★ You will frequently be asked to send the email again. Ask for the name, number and email of the person you are speaking to, and email them immediately before they forget about your phone call.

Alternatively, they may contact you for more information:

- ★ Think about what questions they might ask you, and how you can use these to say the things that you want to say.
- ★ It is always good to have personal stories or accounts, as these make the story more human and interesting - and journalists like this. Jot down a few examples.
- ★ When you are talking to the reporter, keep a copy of the news release and any background material close at hand so you can refer to it easily.
- ★ If they ring at a difficult time, or you just want a few minutes to compose yourself, ask for their number and ring back in ten minutes.
- ★ Never say anything to a journalist that you don't want to see in print.



sample press release

BUSYROAD ESTATE TENANTS ASSOCIATION

News release

For immediate use

Sunday 1st August 2007

## **CHILDREN RECLAIM THE STREET**

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A rat-run will become a fun-run on Sunday 7th August, when Busyroad Estate Tenants Association hold a kids' Fun Day. Speedy Hill and Death Trap Road will be closed to traffic and transformed into a playground. Picnic tables and a bouncy castle will take the place of lorries and cars.

100 children under 16 live in Speedy Hill and Death Trap Road, with a further 400 in the surrounding area. "This is a fun day, but we also have a serious point to make" said Mary Jones, the secretary of the Association. "Traffic in Busyroad estate is fast, constant and heavy. We need traffic calming measures, and safe play areas for our children."

ENDS

For further information contact:

Secretary:

Mary Jones, 3 Backgarden Street, Brighton

Tel: 01273 708954

Email: [maryjones@busyroadta.org.uk](mailto:maryjones@busyroadta.org.uk)

Chair:

Ben Miles, 228 Speedy Hill, Brighton

Tel: 01273 671151 (wk) or 01273 274455 (hm)

Email: [benmiles@busyroadta.org.uk](mailto:benmiles@busyroadta.org.uk)

NOTE TO PICTURE EDITOR:

A children's parade will take place at 2pm