

Action Guide

SENDING OUT A MEDIA RELEASE

A great way of getting free publicity about your project and letting other people know what you are doing is to send out a media release. A media release is a short (usually no more than one page) write-up about an event, project or issue that you send to the news media.

A media release can also be called a press release or a news release.

How does a media release work?

Sending a media release to the news media is a good way of getting their attention and letting them know that something's coming up. A lot of what you see in the news starts from or is based on a media release.

When should I send a media release?

It's no good sending out your media release about an upcoming event the day before it happens and expecting journalists to turn up. Give journalists at least a week's notice, especially if you are having an event or launching a project.

However, if you are doing a media release about an important issue currently in the news, send it out as soon as possible.

What should be in the media release?

Sending out a media release does not mean it will automatically go in the newspaper, on TV or on the radio. There are ways to improve your chances of getting your media release in the news.

Make sure your media release is well written and interesting. The news media get heaps of media releases every day, and they don't have time to read every one or have the space to fit them all in.

The key thing is to grab their attention by putting the most important or interesting information in the first sentence.

Allow one sentence for each new idea or information you want to include. Don't try to stick too many details in one sentence or it will be too hard to read.

The media release should aim to answer the six basic questions that the media will want to know before considering whether to use it. These are:

WHAT?

- If it's an event, what is it about and what is it called?
- If it's an issue, what is the problem?

WHERE?

- Where is the event being held?
- Is this a local issue, nationwide or worldwide?

WHEN?

- When is it happening? Make sure you give the day and start/finish times.
- Sometimes issues need to be sorted out quickly – such as plans to close a local skate park. The media need to know that.

HOW?

- How has the event been organised?
- How can the issue be fixed (e.g. local council funding)?

WHY?

- Why is the event happening? What is its purpose?
- Why should the public care about the issue?

WHO?

- Who is organising or hosting the event? Who are the important people involved?
- Who are the people responsible for deciding what will happen (e.g. the council)?

Pictures and captions

Including a good photo and descriptive caption can mean the newspaper will be much more interested in publishing your story.

Permissions

You **must** get the permission of the people you quote or photograph before you send off your media release.

When you've written up your media release:

- Get someone to proofread it. Make sure that you haven't got any spelling mistakes or incorrect facts. Make sure that people's names and contact phone numbers are right.
- Email or fax it through to your local newspaper, radio or TV station, or even all three. It should be addressed to the chief reporter or the editor and have a cover note that briefly explains what it is about.
- Someone from the media may contact you for an interview, ask some questions or take a photograph. Make sure you are available to meet or talk with them.
- Check your paper, internet, radio or TV station that week to see if your media release was printed or broadcast. If it wasn't, don't worry – good on you for trying and don't give up. Next time you have something interesting happening or new to say, rewrite the media release with the new information and try again.

What does a media release look like?

A media release will usually have five parts.

1. **AT THE TOP OF THE PAPER:** Write **MEDIA RELEASE** in bold and below that the date you are sending it out.
2. **HEADLINE:** The aim is to catch the reader's eye and their interest. The headline should be in bold and give a clue of what the media release is about.
3. **INTRODUCTION OR ANGLE:** This is the first thing the editor or journalist will read, so it has to grab their attention and make them want to keep reading. The first sentence should be a quick summary of what the media release is about (less than 35 words). It will also answer one or some of the six basic questions that the reader will want to know, including: What? Why? Who? When? Where? How?
4. **BODY:** This is the main part of the media release. It should answer all the rest of questions the reader wants to know that aren't covered in the introduction. It is a good idea to include a quote from someone who can explain what the project or event is about. When you've finished writing your media release, write **ENDS** in bold at the bottom after the text. This is to let the media know that there is no more information that should be included in the story. If your media release is more than one page, write **MORE** at the bottom of each page so that the media know there is more information to come.
5. **CONTACT INFORMATION:** Put contact details at the end of your media release in case the media need more information.

EXAMPLE

MEDIA RELEASE FOR AN EVENT

Note: The media release is being sent out a week before the actual event so the media have time to do something about it.

MEDIA RELEASE

8 SEPTEMBER 2010

HEADLINE

YOUNG PEOPLE TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE

INTRODUCTION OR ANGLE

Read My Lips is an exciting one-day event, aimed at getting young people's voices heard by society's decision-makers, on 15 September in Wellington.

This paragraph answers the 'What?' question, as well as giving an interesting angle or fact to get the reader's interest. It is also no more than 35 words.

BODY

The event, called Read My Lips, has been created by a group of young people from Wellington. Its goal is to encourage more young people to speak out about issues that are important to them, by stirring up their thoughts and passions and helping them to get going on ways to get their voices heard.

This paragraph includes the 'When?' and 'Who?' questions.

A key part of this event is to run training workshops for young people on how to write submissions and organise events, and other ways to get their voices out there. Young people will also share information about local and global youth issues and encourage young people to speak out on things that are important to them.

This paragraph gives more information about who will be at the event.

"This is a great event. We're here to get our voices heard and get the skills to make that happen," says Jo, one of the organisers.

Quote from someone involved in the event, which also answers the 'Why?' question.

ENDS

For more information contact:
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