

# Media Tip Writing a Press Release

## Why write a press release?

To get reporters' attention so they want to cover your story. A press release is like a resume for your story...one page that is so interesting a reporter wants more.

Here are five steps to writing a press release that gets noticed.



## Attention-Grabbing Headline

Reporters, editors and news directors get a stack of news releases each day. They skim, not read. Your headline may be the only thing that gets read. Make sure it jumps off the page and grabs attention.

## Format

Double-space your release. End your release with a plug (next meeting time/location) for the organization, including a website address for more information about your issue.

## Lead Paragraph

Your first sentence should summarize "who," "what," "when," "why," and "where" (and sometimes "how"). Focus on "what's new" and "why this is important". Use one noun and a strong verb. Your lead paragraph should be strong enough to stand on its own, even if the rest of the release gets cut.

*Example:* Wauwatosa, February 23 - One in three smokers in Wisconsin will be diagnosed with cancer by the time they reach 50 years old, which means this state will see nearly 8,000 new cancer victims a year, according to a new study in the New England Journal of Medicine.

## Strong Quotes

People read quotes. Any opinion, assertion, or judgment must appear in quotes. A strong quote answers: "Why is this important?" "Why should I care?"

*Strong:* "This proves overwhelmingly that tobacco is Wisconsin's most serious health threat. Not taking action to reduce smoking would be immoral."

*Weak:* "This was a really good study that will help us in the discussion of how to improve healthcare."

## Use Facts Judiciously

Don't bog your reader down with facts and statistics. Pick one or two. Save most data and more complex facts for a fact sheet that will accompany the press release. That way, if reporters need facts for their story, they'll have them.

## Contact Information

Always include the name and phone number of the person available for additional comment.