How to write a press release

The three basic rules are:

1. The five Ws (and a H)
2. The inverted pyramid
3. The **'so what?'** test

The Five Ws (and a H)

These are very simple questions that should be addressed in your very first paragraph:

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?

The Inverted Pyramid

Write the release in the form of an inverted pyramid - with the main points at the top and less important information further down. This format is used for news writing and if you follow the style a journalist will be able to use the release as it is or adapt it easily. Avoid putting important facts later on in the release because the reader or editor may not bother to look for them.

The 'So What?' Test

The 'So What?' test is very simple. What is it about your press release that makes it interesting? Why should a reporter care? What is in it that is new, relevant, interesting or important?

You should address this in your headline and first paragraph. Media outlets get hundreds of press releases every day. Your press release needs to grab the attention of the journalist. It should be short, snappy and relevant.

Golden Rules

1. Press releases should always be typed and, preferably, should be e-mailed to your media contacts, rather than posted or delivered by hand. Never include a press release as an attachment, always include it in the body of the email
2. Press releases should be consistent in appearance: you could put your organisation's logo at the top of every press release you send out. Underneath the logo, put the words

'Press Release' and list your contact details and the date and time of the release. At the end, type the word 'ENDS'

3. Your headline should be attention-grabbing, short and to the point
4. Emphasise events that promote photo opportunities, or supply them with photos yourself
5. The first paragraph should 'hook' the reader – again, it should be short and get straight to the point of the press release. The rest of the press release should answer the questions: who, what, why, when, where and how?
6. If publicising an event, make sure to include details of time, place and who to contact for further information
7. Use quotes from the people involved in your organisation (e.g. the Director or CEO or an adult learner) to emphasise the points you are making in the press release and make it more interesting
8. Use direct and simple language throughout the press release. Do not use jargon, abbreviations or acronyms
9. Keep your press release short and to the point – try to keep it to one page, if possible
10. Include background information about your organisation, or the contents of the press release, in a 'Note to Editors'
11. Follow up your press release with a phone call to the journalist

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Press Release
[Insert the date here]

Contact: [Your name]
Tel: [Your number]

[Insert catchy headline here]

Paragraph 1: [Who, What, Where, When, Why, How]

Paragraph 2: [Insert quote from somebody in your organisation e.g. Speaking at the launch, AONTAS Director Berni Brady said...]

Paragraph 3: [Insert relevant facts and figures]

Paragraph 4: [Insert additional quote or more information]

ENDS

Note to Editors

[Insert any background information about the event you are running or the work your organisation does in this space]