



# Press releases - how to guide

This resource is a guide to writing an effective press release. All journalists need to see a press release before they even begin to consider writing your story. A standard release should be about 300 words maximum.

At the top of your release, either write **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** if your story can be published straight away or **EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01AM MONDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER** for example if the story must not be published until a certain date. Always put your contact details directly underneath, preferably accompanied with a mobile number (TIP: put contact details in **BOLD** print, so that they are immediately accessible to journalists)

## TITLE

Write this once you have drafted your press release. It has to be succinct and attract attention to your story. Make sure you include the location in the title (E.G 'Bristol...' as this will ensure the journalist sees that the story is relevant to their area/region).

## INTRO

Start with a bang. Get the five W's in straight away – **Who, When, What, Where, Why**. This should ideally be a sentence that is no more than 30 words long.

## FIRST PARAGRAPH

Make your points in order of importance. Expand on what you have mentioned in the introduction, prioritizing 'who' and 'what'. Any key messaging should go into this paragraph.

## SECOND PARAGRAPH

The second paragraph should elaborate on the first one. You are essentially telling a story, so you must give the reader the full picture. Spell out the facts; give statistics, quote names and numbers of people involved. Usually this paragraph contains the 'where' and 'when'

## THIRD PARAGRAPH

Your third paragraph should start with a quote. A quote is a statement by one of the organizers of your event or the most relevant person in the story. It is an emotive, strong statement and it is maximum 35 words long. The quote should be brief, providing an overview of the event. If writing a quote for somebody else, get their approval before using it. Remember to give the person's full name, their role (if relevant) and which area they are from and highlight in bold to draw attention to it. The remainder of the paragraph can contain any supplementary information on the event or campaign.

## CONCLUSION

It can be a good idea to round off your press release with a conclusion, summing up the main details of the release.

Make sure it is clear where your story ends, writing ENDS underneath your final paragraph.

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## **CONTACT**

Give names and numbers of people a journalist can contact for further information.

## **NOTES TO EDITOR**

This is written at the bottom of your release and where you will first attach any photographs, with names from left to right. If your group is bigger than five people, just note any prominent individuals – for example an MP or group leader. You can also include other relevant information, for example how the journalist can get more details on information/statistics quoted in your press release.

## **PHOTOS**

If the story is photogenic, give details of what, when and where photographs can be taken, or supply your own photos

## **SOME TIPS**

-Press releases benefit from fluidity and you may tell from the format, they need to be rhythmic, with larger paragraphs interspersed by smaller ones.

-You need to ensure that your story has a local angle to it as this is what regional press want. Do not be afraid to emphasize this if appropriate.

-If your story is part of a nationwide fundraising initiative/campaign, is it possible to factor any national activity/wider campaign into your release?

E.g. Oxjam- mention national statistics on the number of gigs/ big acts taking part/ how many years Oxjam has been running