

## Press releases

Adapted from: <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~hallahan/hpubty.htm>  
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### Format

- 1-2 pages maximum (400-500 words)
- Strong lede (5Ws & H: Who, what, when, where, why, how)
- Typewritten, 12-point font, left justified with no indent to begin paragraphs
- double spaced, but do not double-double space between paragraphs
- If the release is two pages, center this at the bottom of p. 1:

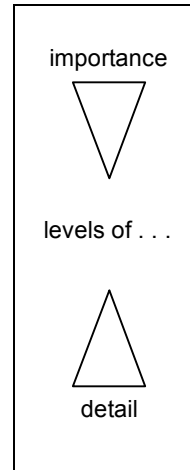
-more-

- Center this at the bottom of the last page:

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### Write for your audience -- Inverted pyramid format

Your audience is populated by media professionals -- reporters, editors, and news program directors -- who you would like to cover your event. They are busy people, with lots of events to choose from, so you need to put the "action" right at the beginning and cascade down from there to increasing levels of detail, ordering your sentences and paragraphs from MOST important to LEAST important throughout the document.



### Important items to include

- Contact Name and Phone (Be available for follow-up inquiries)
- Release time ("For Immediate Release" or embargo with date and time, e.g., "For Release on 05/01/05 at 5 pm")
- Headline (what you suggested -- it might well be changed by the media)
- Dateline (site of the release)
- Date

### Common Problems

- No news of interest to editor (usually a misdirected release)
- News is buried (often a ploy when news is bad)
- Ledes with wrong focus, wordy
- Missing information; fail to anticipate basic questions
- Excessive commercialism (self-laudatory, excessive adjectives)
- Lacks strong angle (Key elements of news: Prominence, Drama, Human Interest, Localness, Consequence, Oddity)

### Make your key points

- At or very near the top -- use short, pithy sentences (throughout)
- Be sure to include standard description of organization -- move toward the bottom
- Avoid overstatement; beware of claims as first, only, and unique
- Use quotes to incorporate opinion, subjective ideas, explain rationale for actions
- Cite the most appropriate spokesperson for organization
- In case of bad news, stress actions being taken to rectify

### Write like a pro!

- Use clear, concise, vivid language, but avoid trite quotes and purge clichés
- Sentences should not exceed 15 words; paragraphs should not exceed 30 words or four typewritten lines
- Check for proper grammar, spelling, punctuation
- Provide neat, clean copy
- Write for the audience (members of the press), not the client (the individual or organization sponsoring the event)
- Proof, proof, poof!

### Example of the press release header (maintain 1-inch margins all around the page)

#### PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Ben Dover (717-245-9999) [your name and phone number]  
Release: For immediate release  
Headline: Marlins Owner to Move Florida Team to Carlisle in '06  
Dateline: Carlisle, PA  
Date: Monday, May 3, 2005

[text of release]

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