

# How to Write an Effective Press Release

1. A press release is brief and highlights an important event, decision, or piece of information. The first paragraph of a press release should include who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how. Make verbs active and the subject concrete, for example. Cover the most important facts first and follow with details.
2. Give your press release a catchy title, e.g., “Nonprofit hails ban on assault weapons.” Write the heading as if it were the headline you’d like to read in the paper. Write a first sentence that makes it tough to stop reading.
3. Be sure to include a contact name and telephone number on the top right corner. List a number that will be answered by a live person – even if that includes cell, home and work numbers.
4. Don’t forget to include the date of your release on the upper left corner of your release. Write “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Month day, year.”
5. Include a quote from your spokesperson. Be sure to use his/her title and the full name of the organization. Sentences in quotes should be short and to the point. It is a good idea to alert your spokesperson about the release and their quote so they are not caught off guard.
6. Write in the third person. Using the first person will make your release more like promotional material than news.
7. Follow AP Style. The AP Stylebook is a guide to usage, spelling and punctuation, and a reference for terms and topics commonly encountered in journalism. Some examples of AP style: Always spell out “percent;” for a specific date, abbreviate the month, but spell out when using alone or with a year alone. Never abbreviate March, April, May, June or July. For a copy or online subscription visit: [www.apbookstore.com](http://www.apbookstore.com)
8. At the bottom of page one write “more” if necessary, otherwise write “end” or use the symbol “###” centered below the text.
9. Limit your release to one or two pages. Reporters hate getting long faxes/e-mails. If you need to include more information and facts, send your release by mail.
10. If a major event warrants an immediate and lengthier response from your organization than a press release, write a one-page statement from your president. Use the title: “Statement by (president), President of the (nonprofit).”
11. Proof everything at least twice. If your press release looks disorganized and is badly written, the nonprofit’s image will suffer. Conversely, if the release is well written, the paper may print it verbatim.
12. Never editorialize in press releases. For example, do not write that a speaker is gifted. Keep opinions and judgments within the quotes.
13. After sending your release, make follow-up calls to specific reporters, making sure they received your release.

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## ***Press Release Template***

Print on Letterhead

### **ORGANIZATION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Month day, Year  
or NEWS RELEASE (if not timely)**

CONTACT: Name, Title  
Phone  
Email

**Headline – One Or Two Lines That Capture  
The Essence Of What You Want To Say**

**Subhead – A line of support or another level of intrigue.**

City, State (Date) – One (maybe two) sentences that summarize the whole story. If the reader gets no further, they will know what this story is about. In general, attribute something happening to someone: “Such and such happened,” according to Sally Jones, Queen of The World, Inc. This first paragraph may be repetitive of the first headline.

“Follow up with a quote as soon as possible,” Jones said. If the quote is attributed to the same person introduced in the first paragraph, just use their last name and don’t repeat the title.

Support what you said in the first paragraphs with more about why this article is relevant and any facts to back it up and make the point stronger.

If the release goes to a second page, make that known by...

MORE

## Headline summary

Date

Page 2

At this point in the release, support information can be given in bullet form if that makes it easier to read at a glance.

A news release should never be any longer than two pages. If it is, you can:

- Make sure everything in the release is relevant and important. Otherwise, cut out the fat.
- Take some of the support information you feel is important and include it in a second piece, like a fact sheet or by-the-numbers sheet.

Photo Opportunity

If there is a photo opportunity with this story, make it known.

Boilerplate – Short paragraph that includes information about your organization (when it was founded, what it does, hours of operation, contact information again, web site.) It is something that should be included on and the same in every release you do.

About The World, Inc.

The World, Inc.'s mission is to.... Major projects include blah, blah and blah. The World, Inc is located at 1111 Main Street, Some Town, MT, 59601. The Phone number is 406-555-5555 or toll free 800-555-5555. The Webaddress is [www.----.org](http://www.----.org).

Let the reader know the release is over by...

###END###

## ***Sample News Release***

### **MONTANA POVERTY TASK FORCE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 31, 2007

Contact: Bob Jones, director  
(406) 123-4567 office  
(406) 543-2100 cell  
[Bjones@mna.org](mailto:Bjones@mna.org) email  
[www.mna.org](http://www.mna.org)

### **Montana Poverty Task Force awarded \$2 million poverty grant**

Helena, MT- The Montana Poverty Task Force was one of just two programs nationwide to be awarded a \$2 million grant Friday from a private foundation to help combat hunger and poverty among children in Montana.

The grant from the Goodguy Foundation of Washington state, will be earmarked for nonprofit programs around the state that specifically work to address poverty among children, said Bob Jones, director of the Task Force.

“Being chosen for this grant is a tremendous recognition of the work we do here,” Jones said. “There are so many groups nationwide that work to reduce poverty, but only a very small number get this grant every year. We are very honored and will put this money to very good use.”

The Montana Poverty Task Force was established by the Governor two years ago and is made up of directors of nonprofit groups from around the state, as well as a number of legislative leaders. The task force is charged, among other things, with helping coordinate and assist local poverty-reduction programs. It gets some funding from the state, but relies most heavily on federal and private grants.

The Goodguy Foundation, based in King County, Washington, provides grants to organizations that specifically benefit children and their families.

Foundation Director Beth Mullins said The Montana Poverty Task Force was chosen for the grant because of the “significant work and the dedication it has shown to improving the lives of children in Montana.”

“The Task Force has been in existence for only a short time, yet the state of Montana is already seeing the benefits of its work,” she said.

The only other program to receive a Goodguy grant this year was the Illinois Poverty Reduction Program, based in Chicago.

Jones said the grant money, which will be distributed over a two-year period, will be divided among the groups that are part of the task force, with funds allocated depending largely on the number of clients each serves.

“In a state like Montana, \$2 million can go a long way toward helping a lot of people,” said Task Force member Barbara Miller of Billings. “We are very thankful that the Goodguy Foundation recognized the work we do here and this generous grant will allow us to continue doing that.”

###End###

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## How to Write a Media Advisory

1. A media advisory functions as an FYI that alerts journalists to an upcoming event. It gives the basic information: who, what, when and where.
2. A media advisory “what” is much like a news release headline. Clearly state the news here with a short description of the event and the issue.
3. List the speakers at your event. Explain who will speak and what they will discuss.
4. Tell when the event will take place. Include the date and time.
5. A media advisory “where” provides the location name and address. Directions may be necessary if the event is held in an obscure location.
6. The contact should be the person who will speak to the media or facilitate interviews. This person must be easily accessible. Place the contact information in the top right corner of your media advisory.
7. In the top left corner, type “Media Advisory.” Beneath that, type the date.
8. Include a short summary of your organization in the last paragraph.
9. Mention “Photo Opportunity” if one exists and be sure to send it to the photo editors of local news outlets as well as to reporters– they don’t always share information with each other!
10. Type “###” at the end of your advisory. A media advisory should never be more than one page.
11. A media advisory should arrive 3 to 5 working days before the event. Fax or mail (if time permits) your advisory to the appropriate reporter, editor or producer at each news outlet on your press list.
12. ALWAYS make follow up calls the day before your event and have the advisory ready to be faxed or emailed.

**Sample Media Advisory**

**Montana Poverty Task Force**

Bob Jones, Director  
(406) 543-2100 cell  
(406) 123-4567 office

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

**WHO:** Montana Poverty Task Force

**What:** News Conference on award of major grant for poverty reduction programs in Montana

**When:** Friday, May 31, 2 p.m.

**Where:** 812 Great Northern Blvd. Suite 100, Helena, MT

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About the Montana Poverty Task Force

The Montana Poverty Task Force was created in 2005 and consists of nonprofit organizations from around the state who target poverty and hunger in the state. The Task Force has a seven-member board of directors appointed by the Governor. The Task Force works with state and local groups and agencies to coordinate poverty reduction programs.

###END###