



Press Release

A press release is a public statement issued by a company or institution. The statement may promote a new product or initiative, announce an important hire, or respond to some public controversy. Although the initial audience usually is a news organization, the institution ultimately intends that the statement be distributed to a wider audience of news consumers. The document should emphasize those elements that give the statement news value. The goal is to interest news organizations in the topic and to make it easy for news reporters and editors to produce a story on that topic.

1. Format:

- A. A typical press release follows the format of a news story, starting with a headline that announces the news in bold type.
- B. The body of the document starts with a dateline, which is the name of the city from which the statement or the news originates.
- C. The dateline is followed by a dash, after which the writer begins the first body paragraph. The first paragraph generally states the main point of the news release.

2. Content:

- A. A press release may include quotations from company officers (who review and approve the quotations before the release is issued).
- B. A press release may also include facts, statistics, or examples to support the company's positions.
- C. The press release should provide the context that links the company's statement to a current concern. This connection (sometimes called a "news peg") is designed to make the statement relevant to the audience of news distributors and news consumers.
- D. A press release may be accompanied by a background briefing paper or by photographs.

3. Contacts: News releases typically end with contact information so news organizations can call with follow-up questions for the writer or arrange interviews with company officials.

4. Writing Characteristics:

- A. News releases may promote company positions or products, and thus are often persuasive in nature.
- B. It is important to be truthful and ethical.
- C. News releases, as with other documents, should reflect the values and goals of the company or institution that issues them.
- D. Paragraphs generally should be short for easy reading and organized in a way that mimics a news story, with the most interesting or newsworthy material coming first.
- E. Writing should be clear, concise, and coherent.



5. Caution:

- A. Before you write a press release, think about the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” and “why.”
- B. Remember that while you do want to provide valuable information, you may not want to provide all of the details.
- C. Do not promote gossip or add flames to a volatile situation. Use discretion with sensitive information.
- D. Provide enough information to spark interest and to make the journalist’s job less complicated.
- E. Always get the final draft approved by your management.

Examples of effective press releases by Geoffrey James of CBS Moneywatch:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-to-write-a-press-release-with-examples/>