

Structure of Press Releases

Press releases should be easy to read, clear and short – one page is normally enough. Write in short sentences and use active (rather than passive) voice, using as many verbs as possible. Quotations can enliven a story. You should structure your text using headlines, which should be short and concise.

Structure

- Provide contact information (contact persons, telephone number if possible) at the top of the page or at the end of the document.
- Summarise the most important facts in the first paragraph. Answer the “Ws” in the first two sentences: What? Who? Where? When? Why?
- Provide more background information in the following paragraphs. The most important points should be placed at the beginning (see figure).

Press Release Format

Headline (highlight the main news point)

For immediate release or Embargoes for released until ...

Intro/Lead

Start with a bang. Aim to answer as many of the five W's as possible in your first sentence.

Source

If you have not already done so, answer the question: “How do I know?” This provides credibility.

Essentials

This includes why the story is significant – the perspective. Here you answer the questions “So what?” And “How?”

Quotes

Give the release life and add quotes.

Anything else?

Is there anything missing?

Ends

Type “ends” at the end.

Note to the editor

Your last chance to tell journalists where they can get copies of a report, a photograph or other information.

Contact

Name, telephone and email of people who can provide more information. Remember to include after hours numbers.

Figure: Press Release Format (adapted from MDG Campaigning Toolkit, Chapter 5: Campaigning Skills, p. 5).