

How to Write a Press Release That Gets Picked Up

A step-by-step guide for businesses, entrepreneurs, artists and organizations — with a fill-in template, examples and a pre-send checklist.

1. What a press release is (and isn't)

A press release is a short, factual news announcement written so a journalist can publish or report on it with minimal editing. It is not an ad. Editors receive hundreds a day and decide in seconds — your job is to make the news obvious, credible and easy to use.

Good reasons to send one

- A launch: product, album, book, menu, service or location
- An event: festival, summit, workshop, grand opening, fundraiser
- A milestone: anniversary, funding, award, record result, new partnership
- A public notice: policy change, emergency update, schedule or service change
- A new hire or leadership appointment
- Data or research your audience will care about

Ask the newsworthiness test

- **Timely** — is it happening now or soon?
- **Local** — does it affect this outlet's readers?
- **Impact** — how many people does it touch, and how?
- **Human** — is there a person or story behind it?
- **Unusual** — is it a first, a biggest or a surprise?

If you can't answer yes to at least two, consider a social post or newsletter instead.

2. The structure, part by part

Release line

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — or **EMBARGOED UNTIL [date, time, time zone]** if the news can't run before a set moment.

Headline (under 12 words)

Active verb, the actual news, no hype. *Weak*: "Exciting News from Ember Coffee!" *Strong*: "Ember Coffee Launches Fall Menu With Five Locally Sourced Drinks."

Subheadline (optional, one sentence)

Adds the second-most important detail: a number, date or benefit.

Dateline

CITY, State — Month Day, Year — placed at the start of the first paragraph.

Lead paragraph (25–40 words)

Answers Who, What, When, Where and Why. If an editor reads only this sentence, they should have the whole story.

Body paragraphs (2–4)

Most important details first (inverted pyramid). Include specifics: numbers, dates, locations, prices, how to attend or buy. One idea per paragraph, three to four sentences each.

Quote (1–2)

From a real spokesperson, adding opinion, emotion or vision — never repeating facts. *Weak*: "We're thrilled to announce..." *Strong*: "Half our regulars asked for an oat-milk option. This menu is our answer."

Call to action

Exactly what readers should do: register, RSVP, visit, stream, call. Include the link.

Boilerplate

A standard 50–80 word "About [Organization]" paragraph used on every release.

Media contact

Name, title, email, phone and website. Make sure someone actually answers that phone.

End mark

centered at the bottom signals the end of the release.

3. Fill-in template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Organization] [Active Verb] [What] [Key Benefit or Number]

[Subheadline: one supporting detail]

[CITY, State] — [Month Day, Year] — [Organization], a [short descriptor], today [announced / launched / opened] [what], [why it matters to the audience]. [When and where].

[Paragraph 2: the most important details — numbers, dates, features, who it helps.]

"[Quote with opinion or vision]," said [Full Name], [Title] of [Organization]. "[Second sentence]."

[Paragraph 3: supporting details, background, partners, pricing, availability.]

[Call to action: To learn more / register / buy, visit [URL].]

About [Organization]

[50–80 word boilerplate.]

Media Contact

[Name], [Title] · [Email] · [Phone] · [Website]

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4. A complete example

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County Opens Three Additional Emergency Shelters Ahead of Hurricane Landfall

ATLANTA, Ga. — September 26, 2024 — The County today opened three additional emergency shelters and adjusted two evacuation routes as the storm approaches, expanding capacity to 2,400 residents.

Shelters at North, Central and South Community Centers open at 6 p.m. and accept pets in carriers. The Highway 9 evacuation route now runs northbound only between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.

"Our priority is that every resident has a safe, reachable place to go tonight," said the County Emergency Management Director.

Residents can find the closest shelter and route updates at [county website] or by texting ALERT to [number].

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5. Writing rules editors love

- Keep it to one page — 300 to 500 words
- Write in third person ("the company," not "we")
- Use AP style: numerals 10 and up, months abbreviated with dates (Oct. 28)
- Cut adjectives: groundbreaking, revolutionary, world-class, exciting
- Spell out acronyms on first use
- Attach or link 2–3 high-resolution photos (at least 1500px wide) with captions
- Never send as an attachment only — paste the text into the email body

6. How to distribute it

- **Build a target list** of 15–40 journalists who cover your topic and area. Find them through bylines on recent, similar stories.
- **Write a personal pitch email:** subject line = your headline; 2–3 sentences on why it matters to *their* readers; release pasted below.
- **Send Tuesday–Thursday, 8–10 a.m.** in the outlet's time zone. Avoid Mondays and Fridays.
- **Follow up once**, 2–3 days later, with a new angle or asset — never "just checking in."
- **Post it** on your website newsroom and share on LinkedIn and social media.
- **Consider a wire service** (e.g. PR Newswire, Business Wire) for national or financial news.

7. Pre-send checklist

- ☐ [] Headline under 12 words with an active verb
- ☐ [] Lead paragraph answers who, what, when, where, why
- ☐ [] Every date, name, price and link double-checked
- ☐ [] Quote adds opinion, not repeated facts
- ☐ [] Clear call to action with working link
- ☐ [] Boilerplate and media contact included
- ☐ [] Photos attached or linked with captions
- ☐ [] Read aloud once; spell-checked; approved by spokesperson
- ☐ [] Personalized pitch email for each journalist

8. Common mistakes

- Burying the news in paragraph three
- Writing it like an ad or a speech
- Sending to every outlet instead of the right reporters
- Missing or unreachable media contact
- Announcing something that isn't actually news

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