

Before you send out that media release

- Make sure the information is really newsworthy (see brochure on what is news).
- In your release, tell the audience that the information is intended for them and why they should continue to read it.
- Start with a brief description of the news, then distinguish who announced it, and not the other way around.
- Ask yourself, "How are people going to relate to this event or information and will they be able to connect?"
- Make sure that the first 10 words of your release are effective because they are the most important.
- Avoid excessive use of adjectives and fancy language. These only lengthen the release and don't increase effectiveness.
- Deal only with the facts.
- Provide as much contact information as possible: individual to contact, address, phone, fax, e-mail and Web site address.
- Make sure you wait to write your story until you have something with enough substance to issue a release.
- Make it as easy as possible for media representatives to do their jobs. Making it easier for the reporter increases the likelihood that the release will be used.

A version of the University Outreach and Extension style guide, which provides a set of basic information helpful to anyone writing a news release, can be found online at: <http://outreach.missouri.edu/swregion/news>.

Southwest Region News Service

Southwest Region News Service is a weekly educational news service highlighting University of Missouri Outreach and Extension programs and events with helpful, unbiased and objective information specific to southwest Missouri. Weekly articles that make up the *Southwest Region News Service* are delivered electronically every Friday.

The personal information (or e-mail addresses) of subscribers to *Southwest Region News Service* is never shared with other organizations, subscribers are never sent advertisements, and subscribers never receive attachments (or viruses).

To receive *Southwest Region News Service* for free, and to learn more about everything from 4-H to nutrition and gardening, please subscribe by sending your name and e-mail address to: burtond@missouri.edu.

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Formatting for a media release



How to put together a proper release

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Essential release elements

There are seven elements every media release should have in terms of how it appears:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: These words should appear in the upper left-hand margin, just under your letterhead. You should capitalize every letter. Some releases use “embargo” dates which ask that the information not be used until the listed date, but these are not very effective.

Contact Information: Skip a line or two after release statement and list the name, title, telephone number and e-mail address of your spokesperson (the person with the most information). It is important to also give your home number since reporters often work on deadlines and may not be available until after hours.

Headline: Skip two lines after your contact information and use a boldface type.

Dateline: Technically, this should include the city your press release is issued from and the date you are mailing your release.

Lead Paragraph: The first paragraph needs to grab the readers attention and should contain the relevant information to your message such as who, what, when, where, why.

Text: This is the main body of your press release where your message should fully develop. Try to keep your release to one page, if at all possible.

Recap: Close with a summary paragraph about your company or organization. This is also a good place to restate your products specifications as well as additional contact information.

Release format suggestions

Always use 8 ½ x 11 paper.

Use a minimum of one-inch margins on each side.

Use a Bold typeface for the headlines.

Capitalize the first letter of all words in the headline (with the exception of: "a", "an", "the", or prepositions such as: "of", "to", or "from"). The combination of upper and lower case makes it easier to read.

If you single space the text (instead of double-spacing), leave a line between each paragraph.

Use only one side of each sheet of paper.

Use the word "more" between two dashes and center it at the bottom of the page to let reporters know that another page follows.

– more –

Use three numbers symbols immediately following the last paragraph to indicate the end of the release:

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Tips for proofreading

One of the most important yet most neglected areas of media release writing is proofreading. You've spent hours working on your release, and you've got one page to get attention. If you don't spend the necessary time, you'll likely end up regretting it. Here is a suggested checklist for proofreading:

- Print your document. Don't proofread on the computer screen. Errors are easier to detect on hard copy as opposed to on a monitor.
- Read when you're most alert. When you're tired, the odds of overlooking errors increase.
- Divide up your tasks. Proof once for grammatical errors, again for spelling and punctuation, and once more for content.
- Have at least two people (besides yourself) proofread what you have written.
- Reading your writing out loud helps to identify errors you miss if you read silently.
- Use proofreader marks or write out the change you want. Be specific about your corrections; do not just circle the errors.
- After you make final corrections, make sure to proof the revised document. Verify that all the corrections have been made.
- Pass it around one more time. It's amazing that even after going through all these steps, someone will usually find a mistake.