



# **MEDIA 101**

## **HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE**





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## **MEDIA 101** **HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE**

"IT'S POPULAR TO ARGUE THAT MEDIA RELEASES AND PRESS STATEMENTS ARE DEAD. INDEED, I'D BE INCLINED TO AGREE. AS A JOURNALIST, I CAN RECALL ONLY ONE OCCASION ON WHICH WE USED A STATEMENT/PR PITCH AS A BASIS FOR A STORY (AND THEN ONLY BECAUSE THE EDITORS INSISTED). THAT SAID, THERE MAY BE OCCASIONS WHEN A MEDIA STATEMENT CAN BE WORTHWHILE."

**Kate Mayberry,**  
**Content Editor, World Scout Bureau**

For a taste of how many reporters view PR statements and pitches this monthly column is worth a read.  
<https://muckrack.com/blog/2018/04/23/this-month-in-bad-pr-pitches-5>



The first two paragraphs of the press release are crucial. Tell the reader immediately what has happened and why it's important. If you haven't told the story in the first two paragraphs it's too late.

A screen-reader will often read no further than the first paragraph - assuming he or she gets by the headline. A newspaper may well cut the story to a couple of paragraphs to make it fit a news-in-brief column. An online service will put just those first two paragraphs on its main page. A bored or confused reader is unlikely to read on. If we haven't told the story, straight away, we may as well have missed it. The lead, or first paragraph, is the key. If you get the lead right, the rest will follow.

The tried and tested "inverted pyramid" method - ordering the elements of the story in declining order of importance - is hard to beat. **Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? So What?** Answers to all the basic journalistic questions need to be clear to the reader from the first sentence. "

That said, there may be occasions when a media statement can be worthwhile. This is mostly when there's a need to inform, say, funders (or potential funders, policymakers or partners) about what's going on.

**Before you start a press release ask yourself three questions:**

1. **Who is the target?**
2. **What is the purpose of this release?**
3. **What are the key messages?**

Example of press statement:  
<https://www.earthhour.org/wwf-and-world-scouting-join-forces-mobilise-young-people-healthy-planet>



### Press release checklist:

- 1. USE OFFICIAL LETTERHEAD**  
Standard font / 11 or 12 point
- 2. DATE**  
Always put a date and location at the top.
- 3. KEEP IT BRIEF**  
Don't say too much (you may find yourself fielding unwelcome questions), but don't say too little (if you want the story reported there needs to be a story). About two pages should be enough. Avoid Scout jargon. People outside Scouting will not understand what you're talking about.
- 4. CONTACT**  
Add your contact at the bottom of the release so journalists can get in touch with you. Do not forget to provide your direct mobile number and e-mail address.
- 5. EXPLAIN YOUR ORGANISATION**  
Add a paragraph at the end that sums up your organisation - **what is its mission and purpose**, when it was set up, how many members it has and where it's based **and operates**.
- 6. HIGHLIGHT ANY ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**  
If you've created a special website, or have photos and video mention it in "Notes to the Editors" at the end of the release.
- 7. CHECK FOR SPELLING AND GRAMMAR**  
Never send out a release with spelling mistakes.  
It looks unprofessional.
- 8. PERSONALISE**  
When you email the release to your media list, make sure each message is addressed to the journalist individually (and that everyone else's emails are hidden, using bcc).



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