



Writing a press release

So you have something to promote; an exhibition to launch, a prize to announce, a new facility to open, or a new staff member to welcome. And you need some publicity.

This guide provides a step by step approach to preparing a press release. There are conventions to adhere to when writing press releases; it needs to be formatted very specifically to provide busy media outlets running to short timeframes, information in a form that is easy to read, use and publish.

Several drafts may be necessary in preparing your release, and it's important to refine and edit it carefully to avoid mistakes and ensure it is succinct and logical. Check and double check all contact details and make sure quotes and names of people mentioned are correct and they have signed off on it before its circulated.

Use double spacing, easy to read fonts and wide margins to optimise legibility.

Press release template:

ORGANISATION NAME

Add the organisation's name at the top left of the page.

RELEASE DATE

Add below organisation name and indicates when the press release was sent. Editors use this to quickly assess how old the news is and how quickly they need to respond.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

If the press release is ready for use, add this in CAPITALS at the top right of the release. This is used for news that can be published at the newspapers discretion.

'EMBARGO. NOT FOR RELEASE BEFORE TIME, DATE'

If there is an embargo on the information, add the date and time you want it released. This is mostly used for news that is time dependent, such as openings, announcements of grants or prize winners etc.

Some media organisations don't like press releases which are embargoed as they work to very short time frames and scheduling news can be cumbersome for them, so be realistic about the time constraints of your news before using it.

NEWS RELEASE

'News Release' identifies the document. Use CAPITALS.

THE SUBJECT LINE

The headline needs to be attention grabbing and indicate the topic. Use active speech. Use bold text and no more than 10 words.

FIRST PARAGRAPH

The first paragraph of 2 or 3 sentences should summarise the story. Use short sentences with less than 25 words.

Talk about facts and use the formula:

WHAT happened/will happen; WHERE it happened/will happen; WHEN it happened/will happen; WHY it happened; HOW, and to WHO was involved.

The first paragraph must contain the main points. It must be clear, succinct and use a hook to invite readers to read more. Use short sentences and pay attention to the logical flow of information.

In assessing your release an editor, or journalist may not read past the first paragraph, so make sure you capture their attention.

BODY COPY

Each paragraph of a news release is less important than the one before it. The later paragraphs are used to extract information from in order to write an article about your news. So be aware of providing enough information so a story can be rewritten by the journalist.

Each paragraph must be self-contained.

QUOTE

Always add a quote from a key stakeholder. This could be an artist, curator, guest speaker, report author or local councillor. Use facts and figures to add weight.

Obtaining quotes should be handled pragmatically – ring and ask the stakeholder what they would like to say rather than setting up long interviews. Guest speakers etc., are generally prepared for this and many can offer comments or statements quickly. Make sure you get approval from them before sending the press release to the media.

FINAL PARAGRAPH

The paragraph should summarise the background of the organisation or individual.

ENDS

Finish off the copy with 'ENDS'. This signals to the journalist that all information after that is not part of the formal release.

CONTACTS

Details of the contact person go at the end. Include name, position, email address, website address as well as after-hours contact details. Journalists prefer to use the phone, so make it easy for them to contact you by providing alternative phone numbers.

SOURCES [IF ANY]

If you are quoting from a formal report, official statement or other source, add it here so the journalist can refer to it and seek more information if they need it.

FROM: DIG MUSEUM
SENT: Thursday 12 May, 2000

TUTANKHAMEN'S TWIN BROTHER FOUND: MUMMY EXCAVATED

Wagga Wagga supermarket site of discovery

A new mummy was unearthed from a supermarket development site in Wagga Wagga, NSW on Monday 9 May. The mummy, weighing only 5 kilos and tightly bound in plastic bags is thought to be the twin brother of the Egyptian King Tutankhamen.

Construction crews working on the long awaited development stumbled across the mummy shortly after lunch on Monday, and immediately stopped work and sealed the area.

Micheal Rolfe, CEO of Museums & Galleries of NSW was informed and his myth busting team deployed to the site. He said "this discovery puts Wagga Wagga on the map as a site for international archaeology research and could play a huge part in rewriting the histories of Egypt and Australia."

"Here at Museums & Galleries of NSW we have long suspected that significant myths about Tutankhamen exist and we have spent over \$10 in the area in preliminary studies, infra-red scans and multi-channel spectrometry of the main street. We just never expected to find him in the supermarket", Rolfe continued.

The mummy was removed from the supermarket carpark several hours after discovery and stabilised by waiting paramedics before being taken to Wagga Wagga Base Hospital for scientific testing.

The bobcat driver, Mr Carnarvon said that he had no idea that Tutankhamen was so small and was surprised by how effectively the plastic bags had embalmed the body. He and his workmates took the first photos of the exciting discovery and have plans to sell them to Getty Images as soon as authentication is complete.

Armed security guards have been employed to ensure looting does not occur and to prevent enthusiastic onlookers from pursuing the riches from the tomb thought to be nearby.

Chemical analysis and plastic bag testing is due to be completed by the end of the month when the mummy will put on display at the Dig Museum and images circulated on Instagram using the hashtag #DigTuT.

Dig Museum is NSW's most prestigious archaeology institution with a rich collection of Bog people, and several descendants of Noah's Ark.

END

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