

# How to Write a News Release

by Jane Litchfield    January 30, 2020

GAC Volunteer



Photo credit: Katie Wilde

**G**ot news? You need a news release to help spread the word. Follow these tips and you'll have one in no time.

Of course your news release should include who, what, where and when your news is happening, but before you write a single word, ask yourself why. Not, why do I want people to know about my show, new CD or grand opening, but why do they want to know about it? Your friends and family might be thrilled that it's the one-year anniversary of your online store, but – sorry – everyone else wants to know what's in it for them. Are you offering a discount? Free donuts??

The second part of why is: Why should the media share your news? They need an angle – a reason their audience might be interested. Examples of angles include:

- Local – location or person
- New/unusual
- Accessible/inclusive/free/family-oriented

Now that you know your whys, the structure of a news release is straight forward.

## Headline

Use an active verb and include the why: “Local musician offers free kids’ activities at CD launch”

## Sentence 1

Repeat the benefit and as much of the who, what, where and when as you can squeeze in without making it unwieldy: “Guelph potter Jane Clay is offering free studio tours and 15% off mugs at her anniversary open house on Sunday January 26, at 123 Main St. Anytown from 10 to 5.”

## Remainder of paragraph 1

Expand on whatever is most interesting to your audience: “Clay is known for her popular depictions of Anytown landmarks on her mugs. She was voted crowd favourite at the recent Anytown Arts Show.”

## Quote

This could be a quote from you, a fan of your work, or someone in your organization. It adds a personal element and some colour to your story. E.g. “This fundraiser is especially important to the co-op this year

because of funding cuts,” said executive director [name here]. “We’re really counting on the community to come out and have some fun and spend some money.”

### **Body paragraphs**

You might need one or two more body paragraphs to complete the important information. These could go before or after the quote. Keep paragraphs and sentences short and factual. Always keep in mind the audience and what is interesting or important to them, not you.

### **Contact info**

Include name, phone number and email address of someone who is knowledgeable and available to respond to questions. Also include your website and social media links.

### **Boilerplate**

This is a standard one-paragraph description of you or your organization, such as a short bio or mission statement with the subhead “About [Person/Organization Name]”. It may not get published, but provides useful information to the media.

### **Photo**

Include 1-3 photos, with photo credit. Make sure you have the photographer’s permission. You can also state when would be a good time for a media photographer to visit. You may also want to attach your logo.

That’s it!

Your news release should be 300 to 500 words long and you should send it two to three weeks before an event, but not on a Friday! If it’s breaking news, send it as soon as possible.

Overall, you want to help a media outlet share your information with minimal work for them. If you are sending your news release by email, include it in the body of the email so they don’t have to open an attachment. (You can also include it as an attachment.) The subject line should start with the words “News release” followed by the angle/most important fact – possibly the same as your headline. Some small outlets will share your news release as is, if it is complete and professional. Others might call or email you to flesh it out, or they might cover your event. Good luck!