

SOS

NEWS RELEASE

WRITING GUIDE



How to Write Your Own News Release

What Is a News Release?

A news release is a one-page document that shares breaking news with the public. Typically, it imitates the format of a news article, which journalists, especially student journalists, can use to whip up their own articles. The most important information is stated first, followed by additional details.

Follow These Steps to Write Your Own

1. Find your angle.

Every good news story has an angle—that's what makes it newsworthy and worth presenting to readers. Below are some common angles.

- **Time-sensitive:** Is this a time-sensitive issue that you need people to take action on?
- **Visually compelling:** Will this demo produce great photos for the paper?
- **Local impact:** How is this issue affecting the local community?
- **Conflict:** Is your story presenting another side to a conflict?
- **Progress:** Is it highlighting progress that has been made in resolving a certain problem?
- **Drama:** Will it evoke an emotional response in readers?

When deciding on your angle, remember the "five W's":

- **Who** is involved?
- **What** is happening?
- **Where** is it occurring?
- **When** is it occurring?
- **Why** is it important?

2. Create a newsworthy headline.

This should be concise but informative as well as eye-catching but accurate:

- Give a short, interesting description of your event to grab your audience's attention and draw them in.
- Indicate what's relevant and unique about the story.
- Don't use your club's acronym (if it has one) in the headline, in case reporters don't know what it means. If your club name is long, use something like "Student Activists" or "Concerned Students" instead.

3. Add a subheadline.

Fill in a few more of the most relevant details without repeating what's in the headline:

- Include your angle or a "hook"—this is what will pique your audience's interest.
- Mention as many of the "five W's" as are relevant. You'll elaborate on these in the body of the release.
- Give the reporter or editor a reason to care.

4. Create the body of the release.

Use two or three paragraphs to tell the complete story in a concise way and include the most important supporting details. Each paragraph should be short—about one or two sentences. You want to keep your release to a page or less.



5. Include a quote.

Don't leave out this important element.

Here are some guidelines to follow:

- The quote should be solid enough to stand alone, in case a reporter uses it instead of calling you to set up an interview.
- It should paint a picture of what animals endure, using accurate and descriptive words, such as “impaled or hooked and gutted while they’re still alive.”
- Make sure it expresses why this is an issue that matters and reflects confidence and authority—you’re on the right side of history, and animals need you to speak up for them. For example, you can say, “Animals deserve better than to be killed in pointless experiments,” “Eating meat is completely unnecessary,” etc.
- Attribute the quote to yourself or to another member of your club who is a spokesperson prepared to do interviews with the media. Here’s an example: “It’s simple: Animals feel pain,” explained Marissa Price, founder and president of GW Animal Advocates.

6. Add contact information.

Include your name, phone number, and e-mail address.

7. Add your mission statement.

This should include the following:

- Your club’s founding date
- Three or four things that your club does frequently or is known for
- Text known as “boilerplate copy” because it’s general enough to be used in all news releases, like the example below (and insert links where appropriate like the areas in yellow)

GW Animal Advocates believes that animals are not ours to use in any way and offers students weekly opportunities to extend and expand their compassion. We regularly host vegan food giveaways, hold exciting demonstrations, and volunteer at the local animal shelter. We also work with the dining hall to offer delicious, cruelty-free, healthy, and sustainable vegan options to the GW school community. Founded in 2014, we are the ultimate campus hub for all things vegan. For more information, check out our [website](#) and follow us on Facebook and Instagram: [@GWAnimalAdvocates](#).

8. Send out your finalized news release.

Timing is everything:

- Determine whether your school paper is published daily, weekly, or biweekly. If it’s a daily paper, send the release 24 to 48 hours in advance of your event. If it’s a weekly or biweekly paper, send the release a week or two in advance.
- Always call the paper after you send your release to confirm that it was received.
- Always send your release to the paper’s editor in chief, and you can also send it to the editor of a specific section that may be relevant. For example, if it’s about an anti-vivisection campaign, you can include the science editor. If your demonstration is visually compelling, you can send it to the paper’s photo editor.



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Tips

Think like student journalists, and put yourself in their shoes.

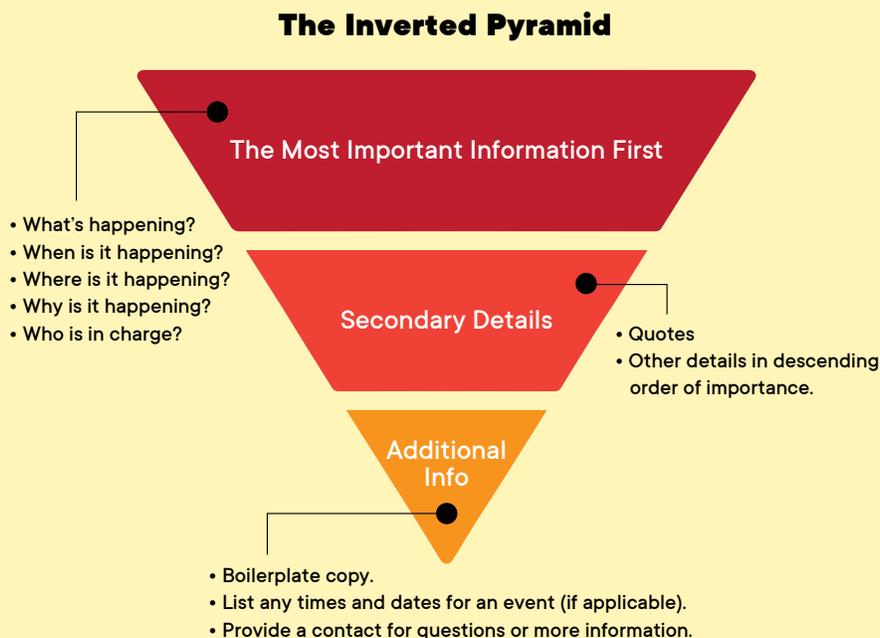
- They're busy, so keep your release short and sweet. The main points should be obvious and appear at the beginning.
- They might have a ton of other news releases to sort through or other events that they could cover instead, so make sure yours stands out by being interesting, relevant, and unique.
- They may not have time to come to your event, so if they do cover it, they might use your news release, including your quote, as the bulk of their article. Make their job easier by using a news article format, including a good quote from yourself or your club president and possibly following up with some good photos as well.

Make sure your story is relevant to your school paper's audience.

- State in your release that your club is a student organization, perhaps mentioning whether it's a new group.
- Look at your release or your event through the eyes of a nonvegan, an average college student, or a university faculty member—what would catch your attention? What would be interesting and relevant? Emphasize those things in your release. For example, if you're giving out samples of vegan bacon while requesting signatures on a petition to get your dining hall to install an all-vegan dining station, you can include the fact that the university already encourages students to maintain a healthy lifestyle (so serving cholesterol-free “bacon” would be a step in the right direction) and has a commitment to sustainability (vegan bacon has a much smaller carbon footprint than does bacon from pigs).
- Remember that your club is also a part of your school community—so tie in any college mascot, sports team, or prominent campus culture that's relevant to your event in order to win over your nonvegan audience.

Use the “inverted pyramid” method.

“TLDR”—we all know that people have less and less time and increasingly short attention spans, so put the most important information at the top and the least important at the bottom.



MEDIA ALERT — MEDIA ALERT — MEDIA ALERT

Students Will Descend on Seafood Hub to Stick Up for Fish

**Compassionate Young PETA Supporters Will Cast a Vegan Plea:
'Fish Are Friends, Not Food—Leave Them Off Your Plate!'**

What: On Thursday, a group of PETA-supporting college students will descend on Venice Beach's Windward Plaza Park—which is near several seafood restaurants—to urge passersby to choose vegan meals and let imperiled sea animals live in peace.

“Just like humans, sea animals feel pain and fear, have unique personalities, and value their lives, yet they're slaughtered by the billions every year for food,” says Students Opposing Speciesism Program Director Rachelle Owen. “Fish belong in the ocean, not on a plate, and PETA is encouraging everyone to listen to these kind students and shun seafood.”

PETA—whose motto reads, in part, that “animals are not ours to eat”—notes that when they're hauled up from the ocean depths, fish experience the agonizing pain of decompression and that the pressure change often damages their internal organs. Many are impaled or hooked and then gutted while they're still alive.

Where: Windward Plaza Park, 1 Windward Ave. (at the intersection with Ocean Front Walk), Venice Beach

When: Thursday, June 28, 12 noon

Your coverage is invited. RSVP to Megan Wiltsie at 202-483-7382, extension 2175, or MeganWi@peta.org.

For more information, please visit PETA.org.

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MEDIA ALERT — MEDIA ALERT — MEDIA ALERT

The Newsworthy Thing That's Happening

**The Headline Reworded and Elaborated Upon,
Not to Exceed Two Lines of Text**

What: A complete sentence explaining what your event is about and what will be happening goes here.

“A quote regarding the significance of your event and how it's designed to raise awareness of the way animals are treated in the [fill in the blank] industry and describing that treatment,” says YourName position in your club ClubName.

Your club name should be mentioned here along with a brief comment regarding your club's mission statement and how it relates to this event or campaign and the big-picture importance of your event/campaign.

Where: Street address (add the intersection if relevant and helpful)

When: Day of the week, Month, Date, Time a.m./p.m.

Your coverage is invited. RSVP to your name at your phone number or your e-mail address.

Add a brief mission statement from your club, state its founding date, and list a few things that the club does on campus as well as what it's known for.

Include the links to its website or Facebook page.

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