



press release
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MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION TO press release

What is a press release?

A press release is a brief, factual and compelling written report that provides information on an important matter, announcement or event. A press release is intended to be issued to the members of the media.

What is the importance of a press release?

The importance of a press release is to promote, announce or highlight an event, accomplishment or organization.

Releases are also important because they increase the awareness of an organization or company, in this case Circle K, to both local media and communities. Through increased awareness, the public and the media can understand what type of organization Circle K is, how it impacts the community and how people can be involved/be part of the different branches of Circle K.

Unlike other forms of publication (print and online), releases are often seen as the most accurate and primary source of information on a particular issue, topic or announcement. Therefore, it is important that anything that is written and included in a release is both accurate and free from biased views.

Who to send press releases to?

Different Forms of Publications

- Local or campus (print) newspapers
- Online publications (i.e newspapers)
- Blogs
- Local or campus radio
- Local or campus magazines
- Television Stations

Media Database This is a list of potential contacts to send press releases to:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vkv49Em1bFdl-Ly2PjyTuirIDan3etb5115u5y6uUSzA/edit?usp=sharing>

Important things to keep in mind

Deadlines Make sure to read about deadlines regarding press release submission. Some publications will require you to send releases up to two weeks in advance. Usually, publications will include release submission deadlines in their website.

Sending it to the right publication Make sure that the publication you send your press release to relates to local community news. You don't want to send your press release to a business newspaper or to a travel related magazine. Chances are, your press release will just get ignored/not looked at because that is not what the publication publishes nor focuses on.

Guidelines to Submitting a Press Release Always make sure to read the guidelines about how to submit a press release. Some publications will want you to upload the press release as an attachment directly to their website, others will ask you to upload the press release as an attachment to the email provided in the website. In other cases, publications will ask you to consider sending a press release via email and directly paste the text into the message as opposed to sending the press release as an attachment. (Some publications will include guidelines for submitting a press release in their website.)

TIPS FOR WRITING A press release

- 1 Keep your press release short.**
 - 1 -1.5 pages in total (including the boilerplate)

A **boilerplate** is the ending paragraph that describes the organization, what it offers to the general public and what distinguishes this organization from other similar organizations. With Circle K, this would need to relate to the community.
- 2 Usually single spaced to keep with the theme of being concise and short.**
- 3 Avoid using the words “you”, “we”, “me”, or “I.” It’s best to write the release in third-person.**
- 4 Don’t go overboard with what you decide to include in a press release.**

This includes avoiding exaggeration at all costs. It’s important to be accurate and concise in what you write in a release. It’s also important to only provide relevant information (facts, facts, facts).

4

Don't use overly descriptive (flowery, fluffy) words in a press release. Publications/Media outlets often get hundreds of press releases a day. If your release ends up being extremely long with overly descriptive words, chances are the publication will not bother reading the press release. Brevity is key.

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Citing sources through quotes (Attribute)

It's important to have quotes from someone who is familiar with the event (event chair, or president) for the press release to be accurate. However, the quote should also be relevant with the rest of the press release.

There are a few ways to cite a quote:

One way you can cite a source is by introducing the person you are about to quote.

Example: John Doe from State University is the event coordinator for event name here. "A relevant quote about the event should be cited here," he said. "Typically keep the beginning of the quote short and break it down like shown above. This helps the reader know who is talking and it also helps with citing the source." (This is commonly seen if you quote more than one person, however, it always best to break the quote down for clarity.)

In other cases, you can paraphrase what the person said. However, this should only be done if you've already provided at least one quote by the person and you've introduced who the person is. Typically, paraphrasing is great for helping keep the release short, however, it is not recommended as it isn't very factual in comparison to quoting.

6

A press release should also be compelling if you wish to increase the exposure of the organization, Circle K.

This comes with avoiding dry and stiff wording to avoid having the release sound boring. Remember, publications and journalists receive countless of press releases daily, a press release that reads boring will just be overlooked.

A few ways to avoid having a boring press release:

Avoid repetition Once you've mentioned something, avoid constantly repeating it throughout the release. Repetition becomes boring very quickly. Also, once the journalist is bored with your release there is a low chance it will be covered into an article.

Abundance of Quotes Having quotes is great to emphasize facts and provide more information, however, don't provide more quotes than needed. A huge no no is having a release that compromises of pure quotes. Just like you wouldn't write an essay that is full of quotes, you shouldn't fill a release with quotes. If anything an unnecessary abundance of quotes just makes the release and the person writing the release appear lazy. Furthermore, too many quotes quickly bore the journalist or editor.

Forgetting to answer the other W's and H Releases should include answers to "What," "When," "Where," "Why," "Who, and "How." If you mainly focus on just the "What" or the "When" you will find that you will quickly run out of things to say or write. This might lead to over repetition to attempt to make the release lengthier.

A few ways to avoid having a boring press release: (cont.)

All facts, no community interest While it's great to have an extremely factual press release, it is also important to reference back to community. Often times, publications or journalists are mainly focused on writing an article that has some relation to their audience. If your release doesn't explain or emphasize the importance to the community, then journalists or publications just won't bother dealing with your release. Furthermore, referencing back to the community helps liven up the release as it includes more than just facts. (An abundance of facts can also be boring)

Provide further resources As important as it is to be factual, you also need to provide further resources for the journalist. The resources that can be provided could be links to the organization or your club's website. Resources can also be a great source of visual information for the journalist.

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Spell out acronyms the first time they are referenced in the release.

Afterwards, you are allowed to write the acronym throughout the rest of the release without needing to spell it out. Often times, publications aren't familiar with acronyms used by different organizations, thus its important to spell it out first.

Example: Example: Campus club, Circle K International recently volunteered at a food bank that provides food resources for families in need. (first reference)
CKI is the largest collegiate service organization... (second reference)

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When you are done writing your press release, always double check spelling, grammar and punctuation.

If needed be, ask a coworker or friend to read over your release in case you missed any errors. Proofreading is extremely important.

9

When emailing the releases, use a more detailed subject line in the email.

Avoid writing only “press release” in the headline as publications receive countless of emails with the same subject line. It’s important to have a subject line that stands out to increase the chances of your releases being read/picked up.

When emailing the releases, if you email the release to several reporters of the same publication, avoid sending one mass email. It’s best to address the reporter individually as this helps create a more personal connection with the reporter.

something to keep in mind

Don’t anticipate that every single release you send out will be read/covered into a story as publications receive countless of press releases daily. However, always try your best on all the releases you send out. Don’t decrease the quality of your release just because you aren’t sure that it will be read. Just continue writing releases and sending them out to intended publications.

INTRODUCTION TO THE associated press style

What is Associated Press (AP) style?

The AP Style is a guideline for news writing. It is mainly used by journalists and editors.

The AP Style has rules for grammar, punctuation, positional titles, formal names, numbers and abbreviations.

How does the AP style work?

The way the AP Style is formatted is similar to a dictionary.

Example If you are unsure how numbers should be written in a press release, look up “numbers” in the AP Stylebook and the stylebook should tell you how numbers should be formatted.

Few examples of the AP style in use

1. Numbers one through nine should be spelled out while numbers 10 and above should be figures.
2. Titles are lower cased when they don't follow the person's name.
Ex: The president called for an emergency press conference.
Titles should be capitalized when they are in front of the person's name.
Ex: Governor Jerry Brown, Former President Barack Obama
However, these titles are known as formal titles because they indicate authority. On the other hand, occupational titles aren't capitalized even if they follow the person's name.
Ex: movie star Dwayne Johnson

Keep in mind that this is just an example. The AP Style goes into further depth about when to capitalize royal titles, abbreviated titles and so on.

Importance of AP style

As press releases are typically pitched to publications, journalists and editors, it is important to abide by the AP Style as this can increase the chances of a release being used for a potential article. Journalists and editors typically write their articles using the AP Style, therefore writing your release in AP Style helps the journalists and editors not worry about reformatting your release into the correct format.

AP Style also gives more credibility to both the release and the organization you are writing about. A small mistake such as incorrectly capitalizing words that shouldn't be capitalized can make the release and the person writing the release appear unprofessional.

Where to find AP style guidelines

You can usually find The AP Stylebook in a bookstore like Barnes & Nobles. You can also sign up for an annual subscription online at: <https://www.apstylebook.com/>

Here is another alternative for using the AP Style that is free: <https://writingexplained.org/ap-style>

Press Release Template

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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1 Company Logo Large so it catches people's attention right from the start. With Circle K, the company logo would be the masthead.

**2 Name of PR Contact
Position in Organization
Email Address** For professional reasons, use company/organization contact email
Phone Number Optional/up to discretion

3 Headline Large, attention grabbing and catchy headline that sometimes takes up 2 lines of space. Catchy headlines are important to be able to hook the person who is reading your release.

4 Body [City, State, Date] This is the introductory paragraph (also known as the lede/lead). This paragraph is important because

this is the paragraph that reporters will first read to see if the release is worthwhile or not. What you should provide in this paragraph is really basic information (who, what, when, and where). Generally, this paragraph is short, no more than 3-4 lines.

In general, the second paragraph should include the why. It should also include more background information about the release topic. This is a great paragraph to list important names (who is leading the event, or the event goals). This is also a great paragraph to provide details. However, be careful not to add too many descriptive words (fluffy, flowery) that aren't necessary. Stay clear of bias, and make sure not to exaggerate. You are still reporting the news so keep it factual and accurate. In general, this is the longest paragraph in your release.

The third paragraph is a great place to include a quote from someone who is most familiar with the event. This person should also be able to provide more information about the release topic. This person could be the event chair, event coordinator or president. Only include quotes if they are relevant to your topic or if the quote provides more information about the announcement or topic. Quotes are also a great way to promote and increase awareness of the organization. Quotes are the potential bridges to relating the topic to the community.

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Finally, the conclusion paragraph can speak more about the release topic. This is another great place to sprinkle in some last bits of details and relevant information. Potential things to include in this paragraph include: if its an annual event, maybe explain when it started, how it started or what it aims to do each year. Maybe even relate the event to the overall organization's mission statement.

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Boilerplate To wrap up your release, include a small paragraph that describes the organization, what it offers to the general public and what distinguishes this organization from other similar organizations. With Circle K, this would relate to the community. Below is a sample boilerplate for the CNH district, but it's best for you to tailor the boilerplate more towards your club or division. An important reminder; if you are sending multiple press releases throughout the year, the boilerplate should remain consistent.

Founded in 1934, Circle K International is an international collegiate service organization that aims to promote service, leadership, and fellowship to all communities alike. It currently has over 13,000 members across multiple districts across the globe. The Cal-Nev-Ha District formed in 1954, consisting of members from all over California, Nevada, and Hawaii. For more information on the Cal-Nev-Ha District of Circle K International and its events, visit www.cnhcki.org.

The 3 marks are put at the end to indicate the official end of any press release.

Including links to outside resources allows your targeted audience (reporters/editors) to find out more information about the organization in case they are interested in learning more. Including links also helps keep the release short as more information could be found through the links. Also through links nothing that is relevant is left out.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO *media advisories*

What is a media advisory?

A media advisory is similar to an invitation. It is used to invite reporters to cover events (such as grand opening or press conference, etc.). Media Advisories are to be sent out a week prior the event.

Important things to keep in mind

The media advisory on the next page is an example of a few different styles. It is best that you tailor the media advisory to how you feel better with.

Also, be careful with inviting media to non-Circle K events, mainly with Key Clubbers.

Media Advisory Template

- 1 Company logo**
- 2 Contact** *Name and Position*
Organization
Mobile Number
Organization
Email
- 3 Headline**
- 4 What** *Brief description of the event*
Who *Company or Organization* **Event**
When *Date and Start Time; in some cases, an itinerary is listed here as well*
Where *Address of where the event will be hosted*
- 5 Details (and/or Photo-Ops)** *This is a great place to include any details you want the intended reporter to know. This can include parking information, RSVP information, dress code, etc. You can also add if photography is permitted for the event and whether photography is allowed for the whole event or only for a certain period of time. You might also want to add contact information (Names with positions and phone numbers) for the reporter to contact in case they want further details about press availability/photography related information.*
- 6 About the Company/Organization** *This paragraph is similar to the boilerplate of a press release. In some media advisories, contact information is provided here instead of above. The 3 marks indicate the end of the media advisory.*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - DATE

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