

PRESS RELEASE CHECKLIST

GETTING STARTED

- What are the main messages?
- What is the angle? Think like a reporter.
- Who is my target audience? Where does my message need to go?

HEADLINE

- Your Headline should (i) Contain a single point (ii) Be factual and free of hype
- Use the active voice and the present tense.
Target length = 8 -10 words - try to fit it all on one single line

SUB-TITLE / SUB-HEAD

- Amplify headline or introduce one additional key point.
- Don't drop the sub-title – it's a great tool.
Target length = 14 words using one complete sentence

LEAD PARAGRAPH

- The lead should contain the key message of the release and take only 30 seconds to read aloud.
- Find ways to grab attention! Provide traditional who/what/where/when/why/how information later in the text.
- Don't load the lead with background material – save that for boilerplates and editors' notes.
- Do repeat information from your title – some journalists go straight to the lead.
- The lead should develop and breathe life into your headline and sub-head. Ask yourself - What's in it for the reader?
Target length = 25 words

BODY TEXT

- **Keep it conversational – read your work aloud**
- Use short words, short sentences and short paragraphs (average 42 words).
- Avoid passive sentences wherever possible.
- **Use the strong** language of verbs and nouns and steer away from fluffy adjectives.
- Spell out acronyms, translate buzz words and local insider usage - push detailed explanations to editors' notes.
- Break up text into bullets or sub headings when possible - this will make it more palatable to the reader.
Remember - Good writing is deleting and re-writing, over and over again.

QUOTATIONS

- Don't just repeat the main point in different words - your quotes should amplify and animate the message.
- Try to formulate your quotes using anecdotes or illustrative examples.
- Make short memorable bytes not a series of runaway sentences.
- Give the name & title of the spokesperson once - thereafter use the surname only, avoiding use of Dr, Mr, Ms.
- Read your quote aloud. Does it sound like something someone might say?

DISTRIBUTION

- **Timeliness** (i) Announce it when it happens (ii) Link it with an event (iii) Tie it to a trend