

Marketing – Press Releases

The most important consideration is the timing! For example, these should be submitted to magazines at least a month in advance. Find out the publication date and deadlines for your local paper. Newspapers fill up from the back, with the most important stories and breaking news at the front so the more time you give them, the more chance that your story will be included in a prominent position. On weekly papers, reporters may have more time to go out and about writing features on publication day than at other times of the week. Another useful tip is to 'save' your press release until a time when there is likely to be less competition from other stories – the newspaper 'silly season', the Christmas holidays or just before a bank holiday.

Emailing a press release allows you to access a wide range of media outlets quickly and cheaply but beware – these are less likely to be read if it's obvious that they have been mailed out at random rather than targeted at particular publications/programmes.

Press releases should be submitted on letterheads and clearly marked as such. The title should provide a summary in not more than eight words (try to make this snappy!) and the **date should be clearly marked** below this on the right-hand side.

Remember that you may have only 20 seconds to interest a busy news editor so try to sum up the subject or provide a teaser in the first sentence. The first paragraphs should outline the activity answering the following questions – who? what? why? where? when? and how? You should also include a quote in one of the opening paragraphs.

Leave **double-line spacing between the paragraphs** to make the release easy to read and keep it short and sweet, with adequate margins. **Aim for one page of A4** and certainly no more than two.

Write in the active tense rather than the passive tense (eg 'the cat sat on the mat' rather than 'the mat was sat on by the cat'). This sounds much more punchy and exciting. Use plain English – don't use long words when short words will do and avoid jargon at all costs. Your press release should be easily understood by someone with no specialist knowledge.

If you want coverage of an event, follow up with the following text in bold type:

You are invited to send a writer and/or photographer to [organisation] at [place] at [time] on [date].