



Media Relations

Journalists have many competing interests—if they didn’t pick up your last release it doesn’t mean they are not interested in the story around the school journey. Establishing relationships with your local media by picking up the phone and introducing yourself, providing credible and relevant information to local issues, and being open to any sudden requests from journalists can be your ticket to successful media hits in the future. Relationships work both ways; if you can be of help to your local journalists whenever possible, they will be more willing to run your story at the right time and in favourable light.

The Media Release

Before spending time or money on preparing a media release, you must ask yourself, “Do I have a story that will interest the media?”

- Would my story interest the public or any group beyond my organization?
- What sorts of stories are covered by the media I follow?
- Does my story involve money or star power?

If it becomes clear that you have a newsworthy story after asking these questions, the next step is to determine who your audience is; that is, who would be interested in this story? This will determine which news organizations you reach out to with your story and which facts are relevant to include in your story. A media release is best kept to just the facts; most journalists who see the story’s relevance to his or her audience will follow up with questions or get the facts from your release and quickly write it into a news story themselves.

Structure of Release

- **Headline**—short and catchy and reveals the crux of the story.
- **Sub-head**—elaborates on the headline.
- **Ideal length**—Limit the body to a paragraph or two that captures “the facts,” e.g., who, what, where, when, why and how.
- Include quotations if you like, but don’t overdo it.
- Make sure to include a “boilerplate.” This is information about your organization. It belongs below the story and is best italicized to separate it from the actual story.
- Provide contact info including name, title, office phone, cell phone (optional), e-mail and website.
- **One and done?**—Sometimes one notice is not enough. Send your media list an early notice (two or three weeks ahead) to let them know that you’ll have an event day or a release with a timely theme. Then follow up with the actual release. And sometimes an advisory is enough; this is a short version of the release that does not include full paragraphs or quotes but does include the facts.

Distribution of Release

- To increase the chances of having your story picked up, don’t send it out on Friday at 4pm. Also, if you are sending your story to multiple news outlets, email each recipient separately. Journalists may be less likely to spend time covering your story if they see that several other journalists have been copied on the same email!
- Be aware of the news cycle (the earlier in the week, the better).
- Try to release your news on a different day or time frame from other big events in the news cycle.