



UNITED GRAND LODGE
OF ENGLAND

MEMBERS' PRESS RELEASE TOOLKIT





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Now imagine that this journalist has the press release you sent. Your Province can become news and be known by many people! The journalist can publish in their press vehicle, be it a newspaper, a website, a blog, a radio station, television channel or social network.

HOW TO WRITE THE PERFECT PRESS RELEASE

The purpose of a press release is to **grab the interest of a journalist or a media outlet.** For that, it must be written in news format and bring a curious and flashy subject. One of the elementary techniques of journalistic writing is objectivity. In other words, the central point is that the information must be of interest to the public and not just of interest to the Province itself.

The main element to attract attention is a good headline. A written article follows a very old structure called the 'Inverted

Pyramid'. The most important information comes in the first paragraph, so that the reader quickly becomes aware of the most relevant facts. If you want to obtain additional details, you must continue to read the following paragraphs.

The same applies to the press release. To put the Inverted Pyramid concept into practice, the new techniques use a simple application. The text must answer five questions: Where? What? When? Who? How?



WHERE?

The most important thing is where something happens. This is the first test of a story. For a national newspaper, home news carries more weight than international or world news. Ten people donating to charity in India will carry much less weight than 10 people donating to charity in Coventry. For the regional press, what happens in their local area is what counts. Geography is important.

WHAT?

Change is an essential ingredient for news stories. Journalists will ask themselves: 'What's new?' Readers want to know what is going on in the world and what has changed since yesterday, so the journalist will be looking to tell them. This can work to the PR person's advantage as long as they ask themselves the same question – what is

new or different about the story you are trying to get published? Why should the journalist use your story rather than anyone else's?

WHEN?

When did/will it happen? On the whole, the closer to today the better the chance of publication. But that is not always the case. Something that happened yesterday or today is much more topical than something that happened last week. Something happening tomorrow carries much more weight than something happening in three months' time. The timing of your press release is vital – it is one of your most powerful weapons.

WHO?

Stories that involve people are always more interesting than stories involving things. It's human nature. If there is a way to centre your story on a person, it stands a much greater chance of being published. Think about the stories you read and why you read them. Stories about individuals are easier to relate to than stories about groups of people. Think about how newspapers and television treat 'big' stories.

HOW?

News pages are full of stories involving drama of one sort or another. Wars, fights, anger, disagreement, rows, mysteries, injustice of one kind or another all fill the pages of our newspapers. It may seem an extreme idea for a press release but in a small way, a dramatic twist or theme can enhance a press release.





TOPICS

1 THE HEADLINE

This is the first thing to catch the journalist's eye – if it is bad, your chances of getting in a publication are almost zero. You should only write the headline once you have finished the release. Do not make the headline too long; try and get it on one line. Also, it should be short and snappy. The headline should be in bold type, a few point sizes bigger than the body text. Surprising and generating curiosity in a busy journalist is not an easy task. Create something that calls to them, and stands out from all the other stories.

2 PLACE AND DATE

Don't forget to add the date to your press release near the title. The date is accompanied by the location, which can be the address of the company that sent the release. For example: London, 20 May 2020.

3 INTRO

The most important bit – this is the essence of your story boiled down into a sentence of no more than 25 words. If you get stuck, read all the information you have and try and tell someone in one sentence what the story is all about. This is

essential, as this is used by the journalist to make an initial decision on whether the story is worth reading.

4 FIRST PARAGRAPH

The first paragraph is the place where you will answer the six initial questions (What? Who? When? Where?





Why? How?). This part of the text should be captivating and arouse curiosity for the rest of the story.

5 THE DETAIL

Your second and third paragraphs should contain more detail. Remember the Inverse Pyramid – the

important information should be at the top with the less important stuff and background information further down the story. Here you can answer the deeper questions (How? Why?). As a general guideline, keep sentences and paragraphs short and be objective in the content.

ALWAYS INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE QUOTE FROM SOMEONE RELATED TO THE STORY

6 QUOTES

Always include at least one quote from someone related to the story. For example: David Staples, grand secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), said: “Currently, UGLE has more 200,000 members and is one of the world’s oldest and largest non-religious, non-political, fraternal and charitable organisations.”

Newspapers have their own styles on how they deal

with this. Putting in a quote also means the journalist does not have to make a call to get one.

7 CONCLUSION

Finally, you must make a good conclusion. Imagine that the journalist will jump from the introduction straight to this part. Therefore, the conclusion should also summarise the information in the body of the text.

8 BOILERPLATE

The boilerplate is a paragraph of background information about the Province. This should include information about the Province, how long it has been established, how many Lodges it has, how many members it has and so on.

9 CONTACT DETAILS

Never, ever send out a press release without contact details for further information. Preferably, there should be more than one person, a phone number to call, and an email address, but at least insert the direct contact of the PCO in your Province.





10 PHOTOS: THEY ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

Last but not least – photos! These are very important.

Photos help to highlight your article when it's published. A good strategy to gain more attention is to send a photo with the release.

Some tips on what kinds of photos to supply:

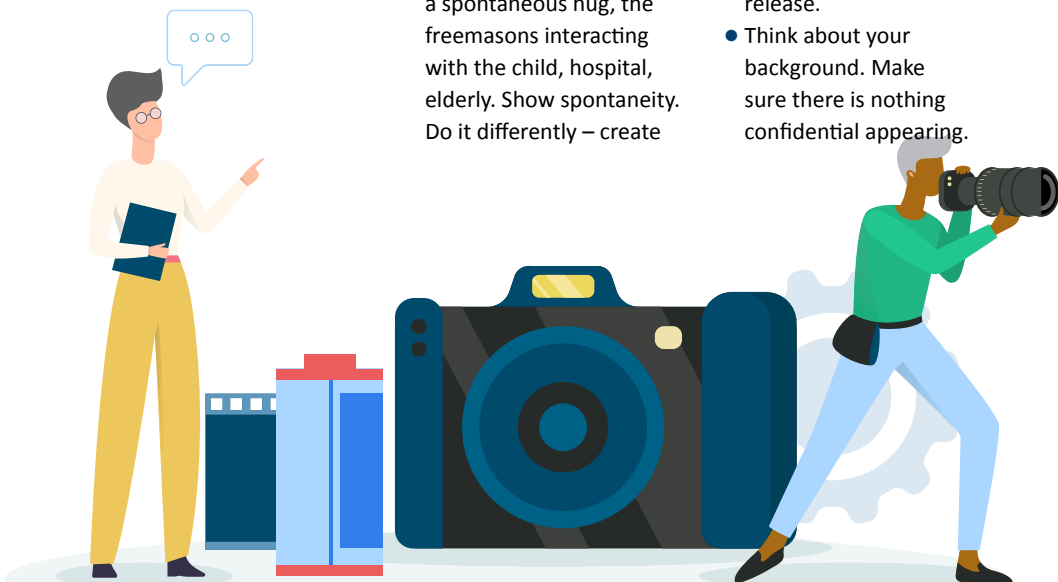
- Yes, you have had a wonderful time, but unless

the people are instantly recognisable to 99% of the readership, using a photo of them isn't going to fly – it's just another face.

- Think outside the box and do not worry about being literal. The best photographs are surprising, amusing or visually appealing.
- If you are showing a donation, at least show people using your donation. Is the donation money? Show a spontaneous hug, the freemasons interacting with the child, hospital, elderly. Show spontaneity. Do it differently – create

innovation!

- If you need a bit of inspiration, try Flickr. Do a search for almost anything.
- If you edit the photo, never use filters – newspapers will not use them.
- For pictures to come out well in print, make sure you are sending photos with 300dpi and at least 1mb in size.
- Name everyone in the image from left to right in your 'notes to editors' section at the end of the release.
- Think about your background. Make sure there is nothing confidential appearing.



FURTHER ADVICE

INTRODUCTORY TEXT – YES OR NO?

Think about this scenario. You have two emails in your inbox. One with an introductory text similar to “Hello Joe Bloggs, how are you? I have a suggestion.” And another with nothing before, which goes directly to the title of the release, content and end.

Which do you think would open first? That is what we are talking about. Writing a short text before the release can make all the difference.



interests them. The PCO’s job is therefore to deliver the complete information in as few words as possible.

IS IT WORTH A PRESS RELEASE?

As in journalistic texts, some events deserve to be reported, others do not. Everything depends on the context and, mainly, on the journalist’s analysis. Releases need to be treated in the same way as news. It is your role, as an adviser, to analyse whether a subject should become a release or not.

INTIMACY

Remember, it is important to be very careful with what you write in this text. The tip is to avoid intimacies that may be appropriate for those with who we have more contact, but that may seem unpleasant to those we barely know.

REVIEW

Always review your press release. In addition to grammatical errors, typos can happen by mistake. Releases full of errors will give a sloppy view of your Lodge.

SIZE

The size of the release is often a topic to be discussed. After all, the journalist can always request additional information if the story





ADJECTIVES AND UNPROVEN CLAIMS

Journalists are professionally sceptical, so will realise if people are trying to deceive them. They may stop reading your release in the second paragraph if they notice that the story is exaggerated. Therefore, highlight your Province's strong points, rather than simply saying that it is the best or the biggest.

WRITE LIKE YOU TALK

Use everyday language – it's easier to read. Do not use long words - call a spade a spade.

ATTACHED PRESS RELEASE

Avoid sending the release attached to an email – send the text in the body of the email. Not everyone has time to open an attachment to read it.

REMOVE 'Fwd'

Another very important tip: never forward an email without removing the letters "Fwd" from the subject of the email. It makes it very evident that you have forwarded it and your personalisation plan goes down the drain. The tip is: really customise your work!

ODDITIES

Newspapers are always on the lookout for lighter stories to break up the diet of hard news. Editors are wary of depressing their readers, so if they are offered something offbeat it makes the story more attractive.



ADVERTISING LANGUAGE

A press release is not an advert. So, avoid talking in the second person.

AVOID SUPERLATIVES AS FACTS

If you cannot avoid saying something is amazing or brilliant, include a quote saying you think so, for example: "We think this is a brilliant new concept because it's cheap, reliable and quick."

Do not state it as a fact. Let the reader be the judge.

DO NOT USE OVERLY TECHNICAL TERMS

Do not be overly technical – remember that whoever is going to read your release will probably not have as much knowledge of the subject, so keep it simple.

STYLE IS IMPORTANT

- Use a common, clean font such as Arial or Calibri. Do not try anything fancy to try and stand out – it will not help you.
- Numbers up to nine are written in full (one, two etc) 10 and above in numbers (11 ,12 etc).
- Brackets – use sparingly and try to use commas instead. For example: John Smith, 34, instead of John Smith (34).
- Avoid initial caps for job titles. Even though you may use Managing Director within your company, most newspapers use managing director, head of marketing etc.



ADDING VALUE

Exclusivity

Many trade publications want exclusivity. On the plus side, it will help your story achieve more prominence. It is also a good way to start developing relationships with individual journalists. The downside is that you run the risk of only seeing your story in one publication.

Different

All journalists are looking for something out of the ordinary. Stories that are surprising or unusual will immediately attract the interest of a journalist. It will help them produce a more interesting mix of stories.

Easy to understand

The biggest selling newspapers in the UK are the tabloids, much of their strength lies in their ability to make complex issues easy to understand. Submitting stories to newspapers such as The Sun, The Mirror or The Metro is an excellent way to get your story seen by a huge number of people. Make sure to ask yourself if the reader will be able to understand your press release with just basic knowledge of the subject.

Emotions

Does your story stir basic emotions? Be wary if it does, because stories can be turned and taken in a direction you may not want – think about the basic emotions such as anger, shock, horror, humour, fear and sympathy.

Does it have legs?

The changing media environment, with more news consumed on the web, means that printed publications now play a different role. It's not just about telling people what the news is, but what it means for them. Will your story spark a debate? Does it offer scope for further coverage in the future – analysis, comment, features, campaigns and investigations?



CONCLUSION

Remember that a press release will only have an impact if it is relevant to the media.

Provide links to access information that can support the press release

The press release must be recent and relevant

Always be clear, objective and concise

All quotes included must be true and current

The statement must not be written in capital letters

You should not use promotional language

The press release should, ideally, have one page, at most two

Use careful language, respecting the rules of spelling, accentuation, punctuation, morphology, syntax and semantics

Use speech articulators to make your text cohesive





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