

News Release

Template Guidance:

(INSERT YOUR ORGANIZATION'S LOGO HERE)

News release No.: XX-08 (Typically numbered in chronological order each year.)

Date: (The date you release the news story to the media)

Contact: (List the people you would like the media to contact for more information. Include your contacts' phone numbers.)

Headline entices people to read story

DATELINE, N.H.—The dateline of a news story describes where it was written. It normally includes the city and state written in all caps. After the dateline, jump right into the text of the lead paragraph.

Write news releases in active voice in the inverted pyramid format. The most important details of the story are revealed in the first or lead paragraph. This includes the five Ws and H of news writing (who, what, when, where, how and sometimes why).

Here is an example of a story lead. "Investigators are left searching for clues following a blaze that killed two people and injured four others in their Smithfield home just before dawn today." The lead paragraph typically has only one sentence of up to 25 words long. Again, the lead directly follows the double dash of the dateline.

When writing, use short and simple sentences and words. Sentences following the lead should be no more than 15-20 words long.

Paragraphs are intended to describe one subtopic only of a story. In turn, a paragraph talking about the physical characteristics of the hemlock woolly adelgid would do just that and nothing else. Your next paragraph would move on to a new subject. Paragraphs should typically be no more than three to five sentences long.

The paragraphs following the lead include lesser details and should be arranged in declining order of importance. This format of news writing is called the inverted pyramid. The most important details are presented first, followed by lesser and lesser important details.

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Keep technical jargon to a minimum. Write as if you were talking to your mother, father, or someone else who might not come from a technical background. Always spell out terms completely before using acronyms. For instance, emerald ash borer would be used on the first reference for the insect. EAB can be used for the second reference.

Keep your editorial and emotional content and opinions contained within quote marks. All text outside of quotes should be written to appear objective and free of bias, editorializing or emotional outbursts. So once again, emotion and opinion normally stay within the quotes and objectivity stays outside of them. Always quote someone when providing an opinion on a situation. Never ever quote yourself.

"Stop me before I write again!" said John H. Smith, a reporter with the Oakland Dispatch. Always identify people completely in name and title on the first reference. On second or following references you can just use their last name.

You can also use an indirect quote to paraphrase what someone said. In an indirect quote you do not use quote marks. Here is an example of an indirect quote: The event was a big success, Johnson said. Those exact words might or might not have been used, but the statement captured the gist of what he said. Was it a big success? We do not know for sure, but Johnson said so.

Normally, when you quote somebody in a news story you write something like, "he said," "said (last name)," or she added, etc. "Said" and "added" are the two words typically used to frame a quote in a news story. Do not write that they expostulated, fumed, pleaded, cajoled, smiled, ranted, cursed, guessed, moaned, screamed, or any other verb of the day from a Creative Writing 101 course. Again, it's a news story.

By the way, most news publications today use the Associated Press Stylebook as the main reference for writing style. Releases following this style often have a better chance of being used. You can find a copy of the AP Stylebook at a local book store or library.

News releases should be no more than one to two pages long, with one-page releases being most preferred.

Most news editors and reporters prefer receiving news items via email today. When sending a news release via email, just send the text without the header and logo at the top. Place the text in the body of the email. Do not send attachments. Links are OK, though.

When the news release is done, simply apply some mark at the end of it to let the editor or reporter know that is the end of the story. The following mark is a common one used to end a news story.

-END-

On the Net: <http://www.mediacollege.com/journalism/news/write-stories.html>