



Tips for Writing a News Release

Before you start writing:

Clarify your goals

Ensure that you understand the sole purpose of your news release before you begin writing. Typically, the goal will be media coverage. However, are there other goals to consider such as brand awareness or social media mentions?

Understand your subject matter

After you send your news release to the news desk or a specific reporter, you may receive questions from the media. Make sure you understand the topic well and are prepared to speak confidently to media personnel if required.

Think about your audience

Take time to consider who your audience is. Ask yourself which reporters, media outlets and community members will be interested in this information. Build a targeted media contact list so you can reach the right audience.

Optimize your timing

Avoid sharing your news release on or around holidays, special events or national celebrations. On November 11, most outlets will be focused on Remembrance Day and stories that discuss veterans' issues. Avoid reaching out to your media contacts within two days before this date.

Of note, the federal election is scheduled for October 21, 2019. Media outlets will be highly focused on reporting political news up and immediately following the election. Unless your story has a political affiliation, they may not have the resources to cover it.

Also keep in mind different schedules and timelines that the media have. And, make sure you know what type of coverage you want. Do you want them to promote your event to increase participants? Or cover it after it has occurred to create awareness?

Timing for different outlets

Radio: There can be a lot of demand for radio stations to cover events or timely topics. Reach out at least two weeks before your event and then again one week before your event as a reminder.

Television: There is also a lot of competition for television coverage. Once you have decided that your event has great visuals to offer a reporter, reach out at least three weeks and then again one week before your event as a reminder. Also, schedule your event between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. to ensure that the reporter has enough time to attend your event and edit the footage in time for the local evening news.

Print: Give print journalists time to cover your story, since they may have other stories to cover with strict deadlines. Reach out at least two weeks before your event and then again two days before the event. If you want them cover the event in advance, follow up one week in advance instead.

Magazines or Trade journals: Magazines and trade journals have a long publications period, sometimes months in advance. Check the submission guidelines for information on timing and how to submit information.

Build a Media Contact List

1. Identify your outlets

Create a list of regional television stations, radio stations, newspapers and magazines that circulate in your area.

2. Find your contacts

Research on the outlet websites which reporters cover local issues, events, health-related news and nonprofit activities. These individuals are most likely to be receptive to your fall prevention story. Look at articles written about awareness events, health and wellness, or medical advice and record the reporting journalist.

3. Record their contact information

If it isn't available on their website, call the outlet to request it. Only choose the most relevant reporter(s) at each media outlet, based on their past work.

4. Organize your media list

Research the contacts you have collected and place your contacts in order of those who are most likely to cover your story. Smaller outlets that only service a small area are more likely to publish a regional story than those with a much larger audience. Outlets that have a journalist dedicated to health, parenting, older adults or regional events will also be more receptive.

5. Confirm your contact list is accurate before sending your news release

If you are assembling your media list more than a couple of weeks in advance of your pitch, confirm your contact information is accurate before sending your release.

Writing a news release

- A short, clear but thought-provoking headline is important to capture the reporter's attention.
- A strong opening statement (a "lede"), like an emotional quote or powerful statistic, that immediately draws audience attention.

- Write the opening paragraph the way that you would like to see it appear in the paper, following the 5 Ws – who, what, when, where and why.
- As most reporters will only read the first few lines, take the opportunity to hook them in at the beginning to entice them to read the rest.
- Use clear and simple language, short sentences, good grammar and get straight to the point – the reporter needs to know what the story is in the first two sentences.
- Keep the news release to one page and never longer than two. When necessary, include additional pages of background information, separate from the news release.
- Obtain at least one quote from the people involved or affected. If necessary, write the quote yourself but always check with the person you're crediting to make sure they agree.
- Use facts and statistics that are relevant to your story.
- Include all relevant details. Especially if you are informing the media of an upcoming event, state exactly where and when an event will happen, who will be there, what they'll be saying and what they'll be doing.
- Include your contact details - name, email, and phone number.
- If there is a photo opportunity, make sure to include the precise location and time. If you won't be at the event, or have other duties to do on that day, list contact information for someone who will be on site at the event and able to assist reporters. Paste the text of your news release within the email and use the subject line: "Press release: [title of the story]".
- It's best to send each email individually. If you send one email to a group of media contacts, it's likely to get caught in a spam filter. If you send news releases or other communications frequently to groups of people, consider investing in a mailing platform such as MailChimp or Constant Contact.
- Refer to the toolkit's [News Release Template and Past Media Coverage](#) for further guidance when creating your content.

Maximize your Impact

- After you send your email release, follow up with a phone call to confirm that they received it and offer your support in covering the story
- Your phone call is a "five-second pitch" outlining why the reporter should be interested in your story. Practise before you call.

If your story is covered:

- Thank the reporter with a follow-up email and outline what you appreciated about the story
- Share the story on media social and tag the reporter and the media outlet

If your story isn't covered, don't follow up with the reporter. If a reporter says they will cover your story, but doesn't, don't take it to heart. They have many competing deadlines and priorities can change at the last minute.

News Release Sample

EXAMPLE ONLY, DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

October 28, 20XX

Merry Meadows long-term care hosts renowned physician for Fall Prevention Month

Dr. Goode leads four weekly workshops to inform residents of the importance of fall prevention

(LONDON, ON) – One in three adults over the age of 65 will fall at least once. To launch Fall Prevention Month, Merry Meadows Long-Term Care is hosting weekly workshops to raise awareness and prevent fall-related injuries in older adults.

Falls are known to be the leading cause of injury for older adults across Canada, accounting for over 85% of all injury-related hospitalizations. “Over 1/3 of older adults will be admitted to long-term care after hospitalization for a fall,” says Emma Smith, volunteer organizer of the workshops. “Falls are preventable and it is important that we learn about their risk factors and take action to prevent them.”

Four events will take place starting November 4, and will include workshop-style classes illustrating the importance of fall prevention. Dr. Jane Goode, published researcher and geriatric specialist, will lead these workshops on the serious nature of fractures and what steps can be taken to reduce your risk of falls. These workshops will be open to all residents and their loved ones to help everyone understand the importance of preventing falls.

“Every long-term care centre should look to provide information to their residents and families of how they can improve their fall prevention efforts,” says John Jones, coordinator of Merry Meadows. “Fall prevention awareness should not be limited to a month; falls being the leading cause of injury for older adults indicates that information should be provided all year round.”

Dr. Jane Goode, states that fall prevention resources should be readily available for families. “It takes more than just cleaning up spills, fall prevention includes knowing the risks and what steps we can take to prevent them.” Talk to your health care provider for more information.

The first workshop will take place the morning of November 4 in the downstairs atrium. Classes are available to all residents and families.

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About London Centre for Long-Term Care:

London’s Centre for Long-Term Care is centred on the needs of the individuals and focused on enhancing personal wellness for all residents there. We look to incorporate initiatives from around the community to ensure that our residents are well informed regarding their health and wellbeing.

For more information, contact:

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