



Press Releases

What is a Press Release?

Press Releases can be different things to different people. For our purposes:

A **news release, media release, press release or press statement** is a written or recorded communication directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something claimed as having news value. Typically, they are mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to assignment editors at newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations, and/or television networks.

The use of a news release is common in the field of public relations, the aim of which is to attract favorable media attention to public relations professional's client and/or provide publicity for products or events marketed by those clients. A news release provides reporters with the basics they need to develop a news story. News releases can announce a range of news items such as: scheduled events, personal promotions, awards, news products and services, sales, accomplishments, etc. They are often used in generating a feature story or are sent for the purpose of announcing news conferences, upcoming events or change in corporation.

A **media release** is like a short newspaper article that one may send to different media outlets in order to gain interest in a writer's mind so that a story will be published about the organization in which one works for or the product which they are trying to promote. The persons reading the media release will be looking for stories that will interest their readers, viewers and listeners. An effective media release tells a story that will interest a number of people. Media releases need to be about the story and just enough relevant information for the story to work. The release isn't the place to list all the benefits of the business.

A **press release** is different from a news article. A news article is a compilation of facts developed by journalists published in the news media, whereas a press release is designed to be sent to journalists in order to encourage them to develop articles on a subject. A press release is generally biased towards the objectives of the author. A press release is written in order to highlight an important event, program, or piece of information by an organization that succinctly describes the who, what, where, when, why and how of the story.

A press statement is information supplied to reporters. This is an official statement or account of a news story that is specially prepared and issued to newspapers and other news media for them to make known to the public.

What are the pieces of a Press Release?

While there are several types of press releases (such as the general news release, event release, product press release and, more recently, the social media release), press releases very often have several traits of their structure in common. This helps journalists separate press releases from other PR communication methods, such as pitch letters or media advisories. Some of these common structural elements include:

- **Headline** — used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news.
- **Dateline** — contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release.
- **Introduction** — first paragraph in a press release, that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why.
- **Body** — further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news.
- **Boilerplate** — generally a short "about" section, providing independent background on the issuing company, organization, or individual.
- **Close** — in North America, traditionally the symbol "-30-" appears after the boilerplate or body and before the media contact information, indicating to media that the release is ending. A more modern equivalent has been the "###" symbol. In other countries, other means of indicating the end of the release may be used, such as the text "ends".

- **Media Contact Information** — name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other media relations contact person.

Getting Started – The Story

First you need a story to tell. Fortunately CAP has lots of people and programs that lend themselves to good story telling.

Squadron PAO's should be issuing Press Releases to local media as the following events happen:

- Promotions – Cadet and Senior
- Special Recognition In Unit and out (Scholarships for cadets)
- Milestone Awards – Including the Wright Bros Award
- Members receiving decorations
- Unit Events – Open Houses, SAREX
- Live Missions
- AE Events, In Schools and Units
- Changes of Command – Cadet and Senior
- When a member earns his wings
- Selected for Flight Academy or NCSA
- Special Unit Visits
- Service to the community
- Annual Awards Programs/Banquets
- Completion of Encampment
- Appointment to Encampment Staff
- National Recognition of Members

Please note that this is not an inclusive list. Republish Wing/Region Releases if appropriate for your area/unit.

Photos

Photos should be submitted in their "raw" state (no resizing or compression) with a minimum file size of 500k.the preferred file size is 1 megabyte or higher, 300 dpi (dots per inch) resolution.

Make sure the following information is attached to your photo:

- Date of photo
- Name of photographer
- Full name of individual(s) in image, listed left to right, and indicated as such
- Specific description of image and what is taking place
- Location of photo

Contact information for further research. All of this information can be attached to the photo by right-clicking on the image and selecting properties from the pop up menu, and then by selecting the "summary" tab on the following window.

You can enter all of the required info there and then hit "apply" and then "ok".

Strive to submit action images of members.

The Header

The header on all news releases to the media should include the following information:

- Squadron and Wing name
- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
- Point of contact (PAO or commander) with duty title
- Contact information (phone and e-mail)
- -30- or ### at the end of the news release

Writing your Release

Writing the release with the Inverted pyramid story format

Just as they use many different kinds of leads, journalists use many different kinds of frameworks for organizing stories. Journalists may tell some stories chronologically. Other stories may read like a good suspense novel that culminates with the revelation of some dramatic piece of information at the end. Still other stories will start in the present, then flash back to the past to fill in details important to a fuller understanding of the story. All are good approaches under particular circumstances. As with writing leads, though, one should learn the basics before attempting fancier things. By far the simplest and most common story structure is one called the "inverted pyramid."

To understand what the "inverted pyramid" name means, picture an upside-down triangle -- one with the narrow tip pointing downward and the broad base pointing upward. The broad base represents the most newsworthy information in the news story, and the narrow tip represents the least newsworthy information in the news story. When you write a story in inverted pyramid format, you put the most newsworthy information at the beginning of the story and the least newsworthy information at the end. How do you decide which is which? You use the news values. (Atch 1)

An illustration might help. Imagine you must write an inverted pyramid news story from the following basic facts:

An accident occurred. It happened yesterday. Today is Tuesday. The accident was a car accident. It happened in Murfreesboro where Main Street and Broad Street intersect. One person was killed. The person was John Frazier. He was 20 years old and lived in Murfreesboro at 212 Moore Court. He was driving a blue 1998 Ford Mustang. He was driving northwest on Broad Street at about 5 p.m. He lost control of the car. It was raining, and the road was slick. He was also driving about 20 mph over the speed limit. He was the only one in the car. The car smashed into a utility pole along Broad Street. The impact crushed the whole front of the car. Frazier was thrown through the car's windshield. He landed on the pavement some 20 feet away. He wasn't wearing a seat belt. He was killed instantly.

To write an inverted-pyramid story from the facts, you first would write a lead that summarizes the most important information. Here's one possibility:

A Murfreesboro man died Monday afternoon when his car spun out of control on rain-slickened Broad Street, crashed into a utility pole and threw him through the windshield.

Like all good straight news leads, this one summarizes the "what," "where," "when," "who," "why," and "how" of the story. The next paragraph of the story should pick up on some element of the lead and elaborate on it. In this example, the next paragraph gives more information about the victim:

The man, 20-year-old John Frazier of 212 Moore Court, lost control of his blue 1998 Ford Mustang around 5 p.m. while heading northwest on Broad Street at about 20 mph over the speed limit.

The next paragraph presents more details about the crash:

Skidding on the wet pavement, the car struck a utility pole along Broad Street. The impact threw Frazier through the windshield and onto the pavement some 20 feet away.

The story's final paragraph wraps up the remaining details:

Frazier, who was not wearing his seat belt at the time of the crash, died instantly. The pole crushed the front of the Mustang.

As you can see, the story would still contain all the essential information if an editor had to chop off the final paragraph. If an editor cut the next-to-last paragraph as well, the story would lose important information. But people would still know the name of the victim and a few details about how he died. Get the idea?

Note also how each paragraph has a logical connection to the preceding paragraph. The second paragraph, for example, is linked to the lead by the words, "the man." The words "the car" do the trick in the next paragraph, and "Frazier" is the link in the final paragraph. These links are called "transition," and they're essential to keeping the "flow" of the story smooth and logical.

Also note that each paragraph is very short, usually only one or two sentences long. Your English instructors rightly hammer into your head that paragraphs in an essay should be long. In news writing, though, paragraphs are kept short. Short paragraphs add punchiness. They also look better when typeset into a long, skinny column in a newspaper.

Why write this way? Well, for one thing, it's pretty logical. Imagine you're telling your best friend that you have just met the love of your life. Chances are you wouldn't start out with boring details like, "I got up at 8 a.m., I showered and got dressed, ate breakfast, brushed my teeth, went to class," then, finally getting to the juicy part, add, "and on the way bumped into this wonderful person I want to spend the rest of my life with." Nope. You'd be all excited, and the first thing you would blurt out to your friend would be, "I've just met the love of my life!" That would be the "lead" of your story. You'd then describe the next most important information: things like what this person is like, why you're nuts about this person, what this person looks like, and so forth. Finally, you'd get around to describing all the little details like exactly what you said and exactly what he or she said, and so forth.

There's a practical reason for the inverted pyramid format, too. Editors editing news stories often have to make the story a particular length so that it will fit into a predetermined amount of space in the newspaper. Furthermore, they often have to do so under severe deadline pressure. Speed is highly important. If a story is written in inverted pyramid format, the editor can simply trim the story one paragraph at a time, going from the bottom up, until the story is the right length. The editor can do so confidently, knowing that even though information is being cut from the story, it is being cut in ascending order of importance.

Once you get the hang of the inverted pyramid format, you'll find it has all kinds of uses. It comes in handy for writing letters, memos, short essays -- any kind of writing that involves having to make a point or tell a story quickly and clearly. Journalists use it, but it's not just for journalists.

Additional Guidelines

- Text should be in body of e-mail, not an attachment (Unless the media outlet specifies differently)
- Must include rank and full name of all individuals.
- Use correct name of squadron (as it appears on the Charter)
- Avoid abbreviations.
- Include at least one and no more than five action shots of high quality. Photos should be jpeg attachments not included in the copy.
- Photos must include complete cut line information including a statement of what's going on. Be sure to include a photo credit and, if appropriate, a byline.
- Do not send everything that happens in your squadron. Submissions should include the best of the best of what occurs in your squadron.
- Submit complete information for all proper nouns.
- Never use first person.
- Other types of submissions:
 - Standalone photos. Provide high-quality shots with comprehensive cut line information.
 - When sending a story to CAP Online News please include Media links to high-profile print and broadcast media stories.

The Tag Line

A tag line is the sentence or group of sentences at the end of the news release that explains to the reader who the organization is and what they do. The following is a good example of a tag line that could be used for any news release.

“Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with more than 56,000 members nationwide. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the nearly 22,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for more than 66 years. For more information, visit www.gocivilairpatrol.com”

Now that you have finished writing

Walk away from it for a few minutes to an hour. Do your spell check and re read it and ask yourself if it conveys your message accurately and if you would be proud to issue it. IF you said yes have your Commander look at it and get his approval for release.

Free Online Release Evaluation Tool

HubSpot's Press Release Grader evaluates your press release and provides a marketing effectiveness score. This score is based upon basic factors from public relations experts including the language and content of the release, plus advanced factors from Internet marketing experts such as links and search engine optimization characteristics. To access this tool, visit the Web site at <http://www.pressreleasegrader.com/>

Sending your release out to the world

Ok now that your release is written, reviewed and approved you want to send it out. But who do you send it out to?

For internal CAP audiences send your release to:

Your Group PAO and area Squadron PAO's

Your Wing PAO

Your Region PAO

CAP Online News

For NCR send to pao@ncr.cap.gov

Send to capnews@capnhq.gov

Make sure that your release is posted to your Squadron's website. (this is not required but it is an item that is looked at during compliance and subordinate unit inspections.)

Externally you should send your release to appropriate local media such as:

- Print Newspapers (local and major market if appropriate)
- Online News Papers
- Radio Stations
- Community TV (Local Origination) Channel
- Broadcast TV News
- Friendly Bloggers (especially aviation oriented)
- Political Supporters (mayors, airport commissions, county commissions, emergency managers)
- Local Supporters (organizations that support the unit financially and in other ways.)
- The local school district (if it involves a cadet going to a district school with the express permission of the cadet and parents)

Additional Resources:

Templates:

National HQ maintains a collection of templates that you can use as a starting point for your releases at <http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com> click on National HQ then Public Affairs to access the site.

Templates are also loaded to your Resource DVD.

Hometown News Releases:

The Civil Air Patrol Hometown News Release Program is an easy way for PAOs to issue news releases to local media outlets about selected accomplishments and achievements of the CAP members in their unit. Hometown news release templates have been written from the events cited below and others will be added throughout the year as information becomes available. These are also available at the Nation Public Affairs Website.

Release guidelines: PAOs may choose to issue a hometown news release before and/or after a special event. If before, send it out about 10 days prior to the start of an event; if after, send it out as soon as possible after the event ends. Please send publicity garnered through your efforts to Kimberly Wright of the National HQ PA Team at kwright@capnhq.gov.

CAP Rank/Grade Abbreviations – as per CAPR 35-1 and CAPR 52-16

Spell out the Rank/Grade the first time you use it then use the abbreviation after that.

Senior Member Grades		Cadet Member Grades	
Senior Member	SM	Cadet Basic	C/B
		Cadet Airman	C/Amn
Staff Sergeant	SSgt	Cadet Airman First Class	C/A1C
Technical Sergeant	TSgt	Cadet Senior Airman	C/SRA
Master Sergeant	MSgt	Cadet Staff Sergeant	C/SSgt
Senior Master Sergeant	SMSgt	Cadet Technical Sergeant	C/TSgt
Chief Master Sergeant	CMSgt	Cadet Master Sergeant	C/MSgt
Flight Officer	FO	Cadet Senior Master Sergeant	C/SMSgt
Technical Flight Officer	TFO	Cadet Chief Master Sergeant	C/CMSgt
Senior Flight Officer	SFO		
Second Lieutenant	2d Lt *	Cadet Second Lieutenant	C/2d Lt
First Lieutenant	1 st Lt	Cadet First Lieutenant	C/1st Lt
Captain	Capt	Cadet Captain	C/Capt
Major	Maj	Cadet Major	C/Maj
Lieutenant Colonel	Lt Col	Cadet Lieutenant Colonel	C/Lt Col
Colonel	Col	Cadet Colonel	C/Col
Brigadier General	Brig Gen		
Major General	Maj Gen		

* use the abbreviation of 2nd Lt for external publications.

Writing your Lead

Your lead should emphasize the most "newsworthy" information in the story you are trying to tell. But how do you figure out what information is most newsworthy? There are no pat answers. The information you consider most newsworthy depends in part on your own values, experiences and knowledge. But some general guidelines exist. Below are several characteristics that can make information newsworthy. The more of these characteristics a piece of information has, the more newsworthy the information is.

Impact: information has impact if it affects a lot of people.

- A proposed income tax increase, for instance, has impact, because an income tax increase would affect a lot of people.
- The accidental killing of a little girl during a shootout between rival drug gangs has impact, too. Even though only one person -- the little girl -- was directly affected, many people will feel a strong emotional response to the story.

Timeliness: information has timeliness if it happened recently.

- "Recently" is defined by the publication cycle of the news medium in which the information will appear.
 - For "Newsweek," events that happened during the previous week are timely.
 - For a daily newspaper, however, events that happened during the 24 hours since the last edition of the paper are timely.
 - For CNN Headline News, events that happened during the past half hour are timely.

Prominence: information has prominence if it involves a well-known person or organization.

- If you or I trip and fall, no one will be all that interested, because you and I aren't well known.
- But if the president of the United States trips and falls, everyone will be interested because the president is well known.

Proximity: information has proximity if it involves something happened somewhere nearby.

- If a bus wreck in India kills 25 people, the Nashville Tennessean will devote maybe three or four paragraphs to the story.
- But if a bus wreck in downtown Nashville kills 25 people, the Tennessean will devote a sizable chunk of its front page to the story.

Conflict: information has conflict if it involves some kind of disagreement between two or more people.

- Remember how, when you were a kid, everyone would run to watch a fight if one erupted on the playground?
- Fights have drama -- who will win? -- and invite those watching to choose sides and root for one or more of the combatants.
- Good democracy involves more civil -- we hope -- conflicts over the nature of public policy. That's why the media carry so much political news. Journalists see themselves as playing an important role in the public debate that forms the basis for democracy.

Weirdness: information has weirdness if it involves something unusual or strange.

- Charles A. Dana, a famous editor, once said, "If a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog, that's news!"
- Dana was saying that people are interested in out-of-the-ordinary things, like a man biting a dog.

Currency: information has currency if it is related to some general topic a lot of people are already talking about.

- A mugging in downtown Murfreesboro generally won't attract much attention from reporters at the Daily News Journal.
- But if the mugging occurred a day after a report by the FBI had named Murfreesboro the city with the state's fastest-growing crime rate, the mugging would be big news.
- People would respond to news of the mugging by saying, "See, here's an example of just the kind of thing that FBI report was talking about. We've got to do something about the crime rate!"

Attachment 2

Six rules for writing straight news leads

By Ken Blake, Ph.D.

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Every news story begins with a lead (pronounced LEED), so learning to write a good lead is the first step in learning to write a good story. Journalists use many different styles of leads, depending on the situation. But most media writing students begin by learning the simplest and most common style: the straight news lead. Below are six rules for writing good straight news leads.

Rule #1: A straight news lead should be a single paragraph consisting of a single sentence, should contain no more than 30 words, and should summarize, at minimum, the most newsworthy "what," "where" and "when" of the story.

- Example: "Fire destroyed a house on Main Street early Monday morning."
 - The lead is a single-sentence paragraph. Note, please, that a lead should be written in ordinary English, not the clipped phrasing reserved for headlines like "Main Street home destroyed in early morning fire." Headlines, which appear in large print above the stories they introduce, are written that way to conserve space.
 - It contains 10 words -- far fewer than the 30-word limit. Notice that the word count includes even little words like "a" and "on."
 - It summarizes the main "what" of the story, which is that fire destroyed a house.
 - It also provides the "where" of the story with the phrase "on Main Street."
 - Finally, it gives the "when" of the story with the phrase "early Monday morning."
 - **Important note:** There are some mental gymnastics involved in correctly conveying the "when" of a newspaper story. Suppose, for example, that today is Monday, and the fire happened this morning. You might be tempted to write the lead like this: "Fire destroyed a house on Main Street early **this** morning." And doing so would be just fine if your lead were going to be published that same day. But most newspapers get printed overnight and distributed the following morning. That means that a reader who picks up the paper Tuesday morning and reads that the fire occurred "this morning" will inaccurately assume that "this morning" means "Tuesday morning." To avoid this problem, you have to write the lead - and, indeed, the entire story - so that it will be accurate when read during the reader's time frame: "Fire destroyed a house on Main Street early **Monday** morning."

Rule #2: The lead's first verb should express the main "what" of the story and should be placed among the lead's first seven words.

- Example: "Fire destroyed a house on Main Street early Monday morning."
 - The verb "destroyed" expresses the main "what" of the story.
 - "Destroyed" is the lead's second word -- a position that puts "destroyed" well in front of "Street," the lead's seventh word.
 - Again, notice that the word count includes even little words like "a" and "on."
 - There are no other verbs in front of "destroyed," so "destroyed" is the lead's first verb.
 - Following this rule will force you to quickly tell readers what the story is about.

Rule #3: The lead's first verb -- the same one that expresses the main "what" of the story -- should be active voice, not passive voice.

- A verb is active voice if the verb's subject did, is doing, or will do something.
 - Example: "Fire destroyed a house on Main Street early Monday morning."
 - "Destroyed" is the verb.
 - "Fire" is the verb's subject.
 - "Fire" did something. It destroyed.
- A verb is passive voice if the verb's subject had, is having, or will have something done *to* it.
 - Example: "A house was destroyed by fire on Main Street early Monday morning."
 - "Was" is the verb.
 - "House" is the verb's subject.
 - "House" had something done *to* it. It "was destroyed."

Rule #4: If there's a "who" involved in the story, the lead should give some indication of who the "who" is.

- First example: "An elderly Murfreesboro man died Monday when an early morning fire raged through his Main Street home."
 - The "who" is "an elderly Murfreesboro man."
 - In this case, the "who" probably isn't someone whose name readers would recognize.
 - As a result, the "who" angle of the lead focuses on what things about the "who" might make the "who" important to the reader. In this case, it's the fact that the man was older and lived in Murfreesboro. That's called writing a "**blind lead.**" The man's name will be given later in the story.
- Second example: "Murfreesboro Mayor Joe Smith died Monday when an early morning fire raged through his Main Street home."
 - Smith is the local mayor, and most readers probably will recognize his name.
 - As a result, the lead gives his name.

Rule #5: The lead should summarize the "why" and "how" of the story, but only if there's room.

- Example: "An elderly Murfreesboro man died early Monday morning when fire sparked by faulty wiring raged through his Main Street home."
 - "... fire ... raged through his Main Street home ..." explains *why* the man died.
 - "... sparked by faulty wiring ..." explains *how* the blaze began.

Rule #6: If what's in the lead needs to be attributed, place the attribution at the end of the lead

- Example: "Faulty wiring most likely sparked the blaze that claimed the life of an elderly Murfreesboro man last week, the city's arson investigator concluded Monday."
 - [Attribution](#) is simply a reference indicating the source of some bit of information.
 - In this case, the attribution is the phrase, "the city's arson investigator concluded Monday."
 - Generally, attribute assertions that represent anything other than objective, indisputable information.
 - Here, there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the man is dead, that his house was destroyed, that it all happened early Monday morning, and that he house was on Main Street.
 - But the arson investigator's assertion that faulty wiring caused the blaze represents the investigator's opinion (based, of course, upon his training and expertise - but an opinion nonetheless). Therefore, the assertion needs to be attributed to the investigator so readers can decide how credible the assertion is.