

Writing Press Releases

A good press release will grab a reporter's or a radio/television producer's attention, while a bad one will get thrown into the trash. If your story is interesting, you will get the coverage you want. Here are some tips for writing an effective press release:

•• **The Headline Sells the Story!**

Editors faced with a desk full of press releases look for something to grab their attention, so sell your news via the headline. Be concise and exciting, not mundane and predictable. Determine the most important news in the release and convey it in a one-liner that sells.

•• **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How**

These are the necessary elements of the release. Account for them at the beginning of the release. Editors appreciate seeing the critical information on top.

•• **Give it Some Punch!**

Now that you've got the readers' attention, reinforce the message with facts. Focus on how the news will have an impact on your community and its citizens. Also, add a quote from the appropriate representative of your club to your release. If your news involves a second organization or a beneficiary, a quote from the other organization adds balance. Quotes identify a contact for potential interviews and lend credibility to the story. But don't put too many. At least one quoted person is necessary, two are good and three is too many.

•• **Keep it Short**

Reporters and producers do not have time to read lengthy and detailed stories. One or two pages should be the maximum length for a press release.

•• **Be Accurate**

Even small errors will detract from your message and may hinder your organization's credibility. So, proofread carefully and check all facts and figures— numerous times. A good way to do this is to have several different people read the press release.

•• **Finish Strong**

Leave a lasting impression. A very effective close is to use a profound quote from one of your spokespeople to reinforce a "live" feel to the story. Or, prepare a "standard" paragraph that provides additional information about your club, its history and mission, and a contact person. This information often will be cut so make sure your second to last paragraph can also make a good closing.

•• **Contact Information**

Include the name and phone number of a contact person on the press release. This way a reporter or producer can reach you to ask questions. If your release is particularly important, include a home phone number too. Also include your Grange name and address, as well as the date. A brief explanation at the end of the press release about your Grange and its mission is also helpful and appropriate.