

Spreading the Word

» Creating Media Releases for
Your Library

Presenters and their topics:

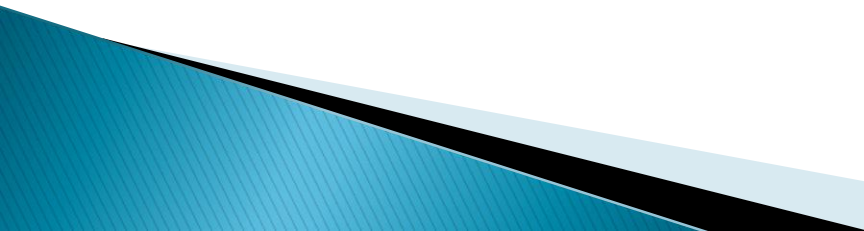
Jenny Liberatore – Library Advocacy in the Media

Michelle Ewing – Writing a Press Release

Moderator and Coordinator: Anita Ondrusek

Sponsored by the Public Relations Interest Group
of the Georgia Library Association

GA COMO XXI
Columbus, Georgia
October 7, 2009



Library Advocacy in the Media

Jenny Liberatore
Lyris Educational Services Librarian

What is Advocacy?

- ▶ Advocacy is arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy.
- ▶ It occurs when individuals engage in dialogue about issues they care about by speaking out, letter writing, protesting, voting, or even wearing a t-shirt that makes a statement.

Adapted from <http://www.fullerton.edu/advocacy/whatisadv.htm>



Define Your Tactics

- ▶ Decide which audience(s) you wish to reach.
 - For which group(s) of constituents is your message intended?
- ▶ Consider where this group gets its information.
- ▶ Timing–Avoid competing events.
 - Check out community calendars to see what else is going on in the community.

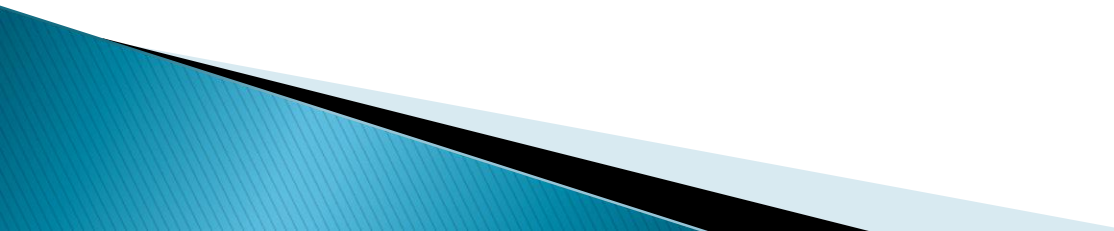
Reaching Out: 3 Types of Tactics

1. Media coverage of outreach to your community through events...
2. Media coverage of personal contact with volunteers, legislators, decision makers...or...
3. Approaching media directly to reach targeted audiences/general public.

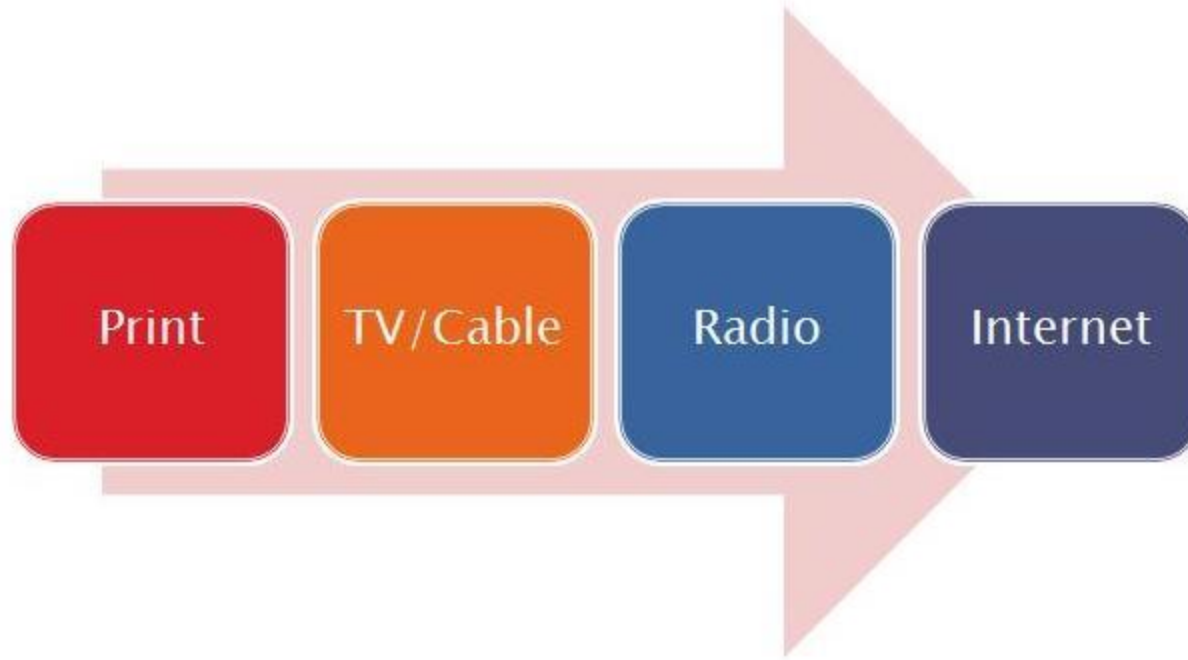
What else might be added to the list?



Pointers for Selecting Tactics

- ▶ A PSA on radio has the potential to reach more people than direct mailing.
 - ▶ Have a representative ready (trained speaker, library advocate) for TV, Radio, reporters.
 - ▶ Choose appropriate media:
 - Audience=High School students
 - Media=Newspaper? Radio? School specific publications?
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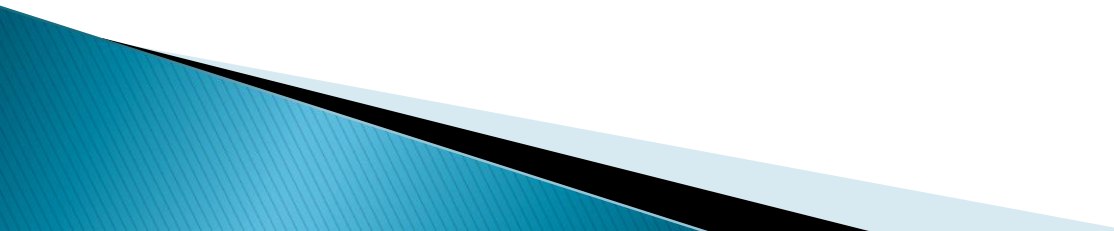
Print Tips



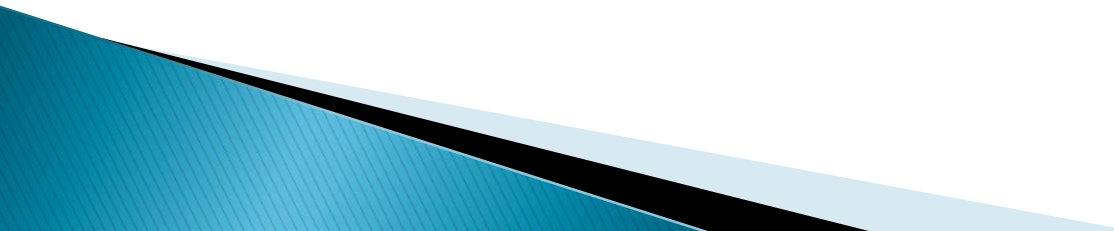
Print Tips

- Communicate succinctly
- 5 W's
 - Who
 - What
 - Where
 - When
 - Why
- And 1 H
 - How

Print Media Outlets

- Library Newsletter
 - Should be a staff initiative
 - Flyers & brochures
 - Talking points
 - Newsletters of Community Organizations
 - Chamber of Commerce Publications
 - Parent Organization's Newsletter
 - Faculty Senate publications
 - PTA; PTO take-home flyers or handouts
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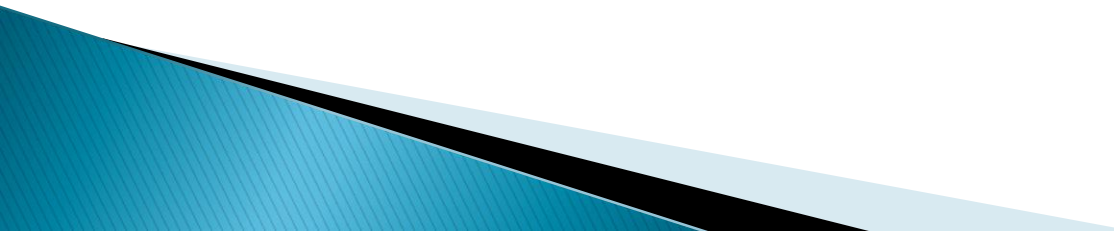
TV/Cable Tips

- ▶ Look polished
 - ▶ Gesture, but gently
 - ▶ Avoid “closed” body language
 - ▶ Hands in lap, palms up—ready for gentle gestures of emphasis
 - ▶ Avoid harsh colors/Prints
 - ▶ Props—books, photos, posters
 - ▶ Look at the interviewer, not the camera
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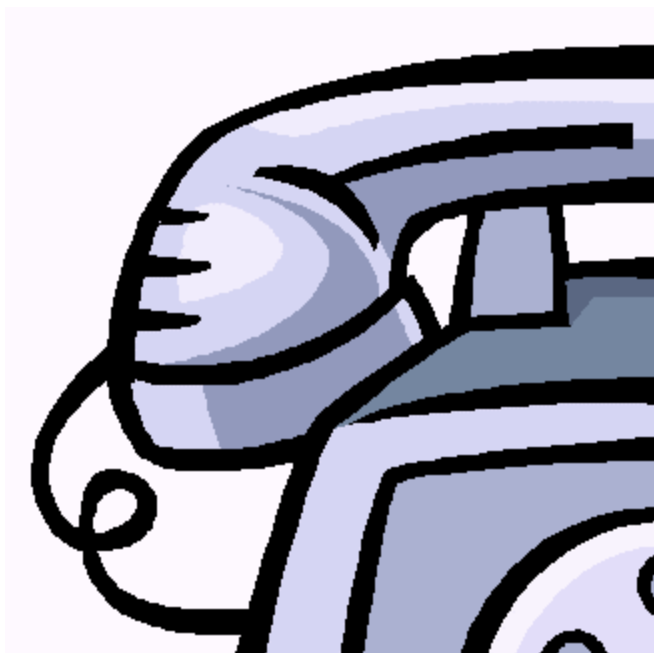
Radio Tips

- ▶ Pay attention to voice quality/expression.
- ▶ Project enthusiasm.
- ▶ Picture the audience, speak directly to them.
- ▶ Rehearse your message—don't read it.

Internet Tips

- ▶ Build positive relationships.
 - ▶ Maintain and upgrade your reputation.
 - ▶ Promote library events.
 - ▶ Integrate what you know of advocacy through other channels into using this medium.
 - E-newsletter articles
 - Podcasts
 - Streaming videos
- 

Thank You for listening!



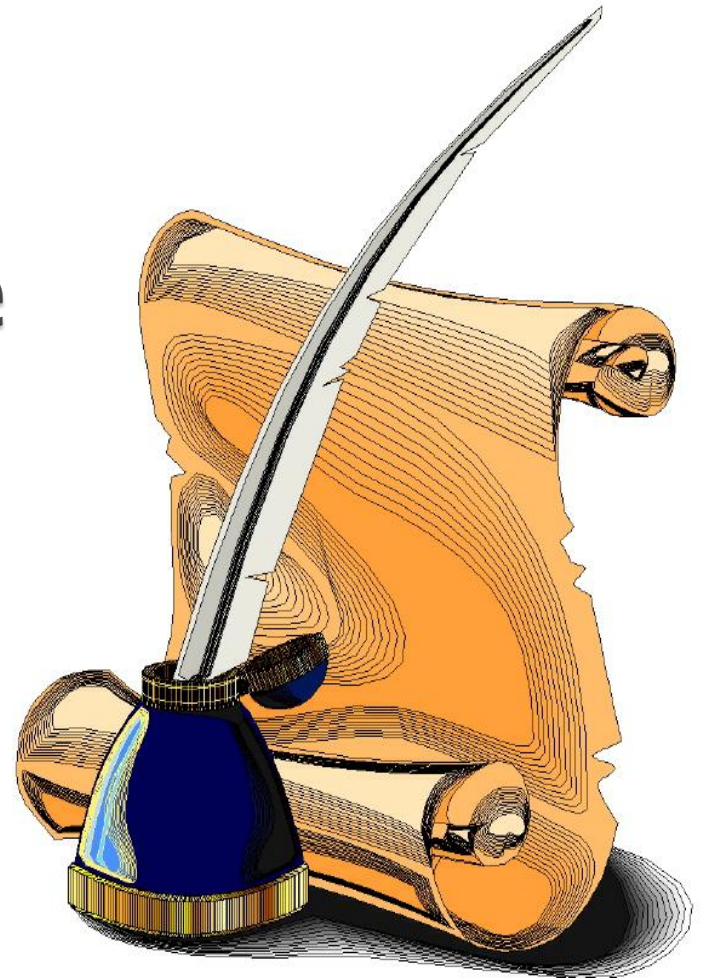
Questions?

- Professional Development
- 1.800.999.8558
- **Web: lyrasis.org**

- Email: jenny.liberatore@lyrasis.org


Writing a Press Release

(and getting an editor to
actually read it)



Michelle Ewing
Writer, Atlanta Journal-Constitution
MLIS Student, Valdosta State University

What is a press release?

- A press release, or a news release, is “an announcement of an event, performance or other newsworthy item that is issued to the press” (American Heritage Dictionary, 2009).
 - You might issue a press release to ...
 - Introduce upcoming events, programs or services
 - Announce new staff members, promotions, accomplishments, materials, awards or donations
 - Suggest feature or news stories
 - Tell bad news
 - Respond to community concerns (possibly damage control)
- 

Elements of a press release

Press releases typically include the following:

- Contact information
- A release date
- A headline
- A dateline
- A lead
- A strong second paragraph

(more on next slide)



Today's Date: September 14, 2009

Contacts:

Lora Sommer: 678.812.4078

Purchase Tickets: 678.812.4002

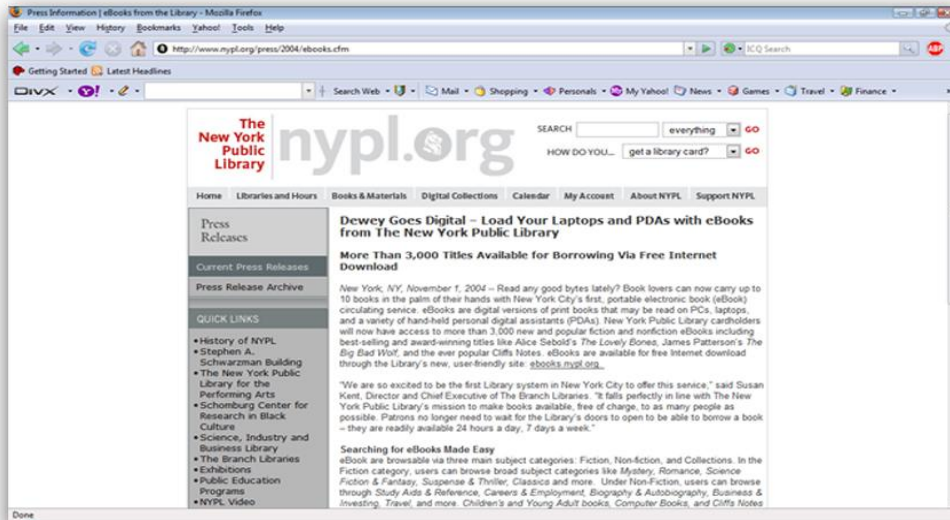
**CENTER THEATRE PRESENTS A HILARIOUS
LOOK AT FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

*Solomon's "My Mother's Italian..." Has Become One Of the
Longest Running One-Man-Shows in Broadway History*

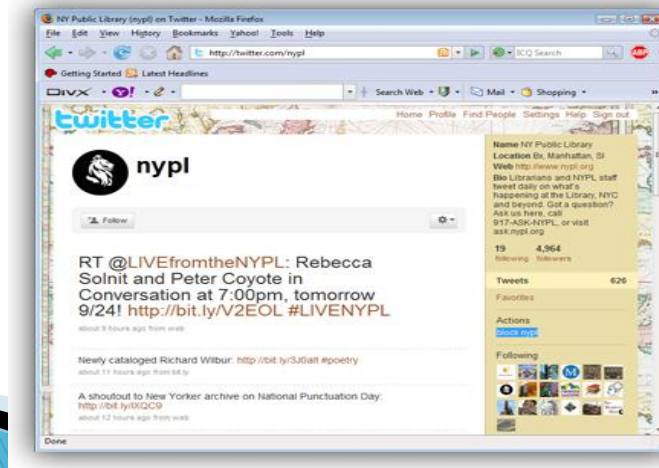
(ATLANTA, GA) – Center Theatre at the MJCCA is thrilled to present the Broadway Comedy Hit, **"My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish and I'm in Therapy,"** written and performed by Steve Solomon. Turning his experience with an Italian mom and Jewish dad into a one-man comedy, Solomon receives rave reviews and great audience acclaim throughout the country. Running from Oct 15 to 25, 2009, "My Mother's Italian..." will be featured in Center Theatre's beautiful Morris & Rae Frank Theatre (located at the MJCCA, 5342 Tilly Mill Road, Dunwoody).

BroadwayWorld.com raves, "Amazing! Hysterical! A wonderful show! I still hurt from laughing!" Described by *Variety* as a cross between Don Rickles, George Carlin and Billy Crystal, Steve Solomon introduces the audience to people with whom they may be all too familiar – the family members that caused them to leave home in the first place! He shares glimpses of the dozens of personalities and characters that the audience will meet along the way. Case in point: Steve's sister, "The Smoker." The, "She can do no wrong in the eyes of Mama," sister. The, "Why can't

More elements of a press release



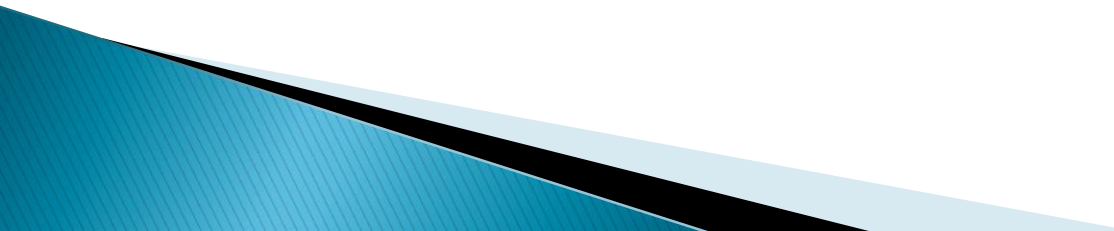
- Quotes that enrich the story
- Company information and links to Web site, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Optional but HIGHLY recommended: Photos or links to an online photo gallery



Where can you send a press release?


- Newspapers
 - Wire services
 - Magazines
 - TV stations
 - Radio stations
 - Online media (blogs, podcasts, Internet radio, etc.)
 - Other media
- 

What happens when your press release gets to the media outlet?

- Ignored or deleted
 - Judged by relevance and importance
 - Formatted to proper medium
 - Used as filler
 - Used as background for reporter's story
 - Altered to suit editors
 - Credited to "Staff Reports"
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Writing the release: Getting started

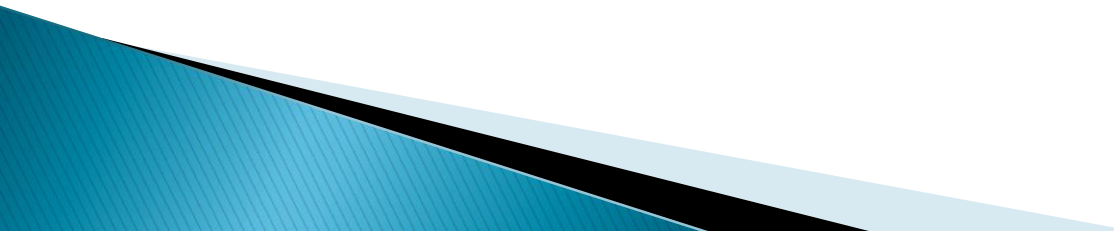
Consider the following before you write:

- What is the topic of your press release?
 - Is the topic newsworthy?
 - What is the purpose of your press release?
 - Can you think of a timely angle?
 - Identify your target audience.
 - Which medium will reach that audience?
Do some research.
 - Select the appropriate outlets. Most of the time, this will be local media.
- 

Writing your headline

- Keep it short and direct
- Use slightly larger, bolder typeface
- Make sure it is accurate

TIP: If you're going to send the press release by e-mail (and you should), the headline could double as your subject line.



Example headline

(from a press release from the
Free Library of Philadelphia):

**Free Library Presents Inaugural Philadelphia Book Festival:
Celebrate Reading, Writing, and Publishing this Spring**

Source: <http://libwww.library.phila.gov/PressRel/PressrelPRT.cfm?id=403>



Writing the lead

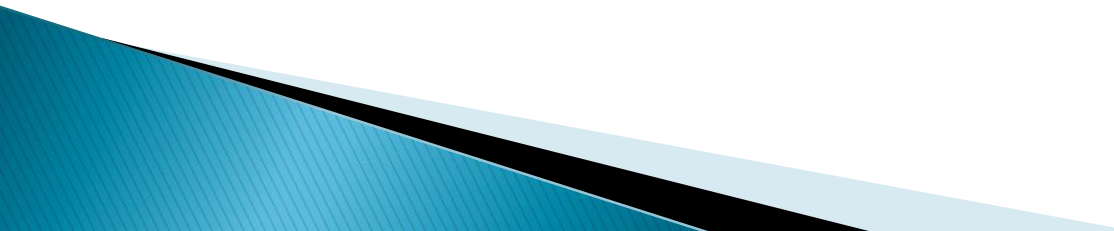
- Start with a dateline – when and where the press release originated
- The lead paragraph should reel in the reader and address all (or most) of the *5 W's* (who, what, where, when and why).

Example lead

(edited from a press release from the
Free Library of Philadelphia):

PHILADELPHIA, April 11, 2007 –

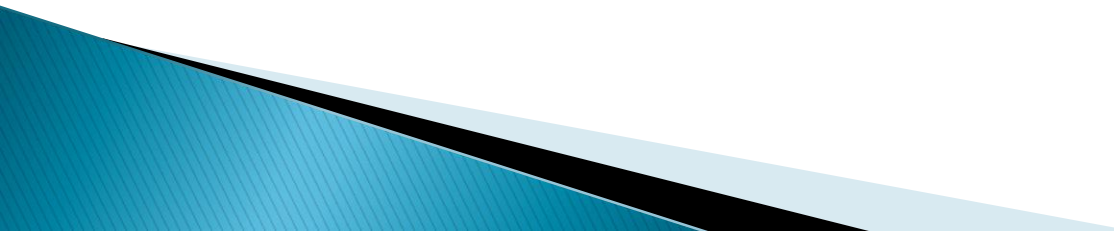
Who says libraries have to be quiet? The Central Library will be buzzing with author talks, book signings and music during the Philadelphia Book Festival on April 21.



The second paragraph ... and beyond

- Your second paragraph should provide more details and background information about the story.
- Address any of the *5 W's* you left out in the lead. Also consider the *H* (how).

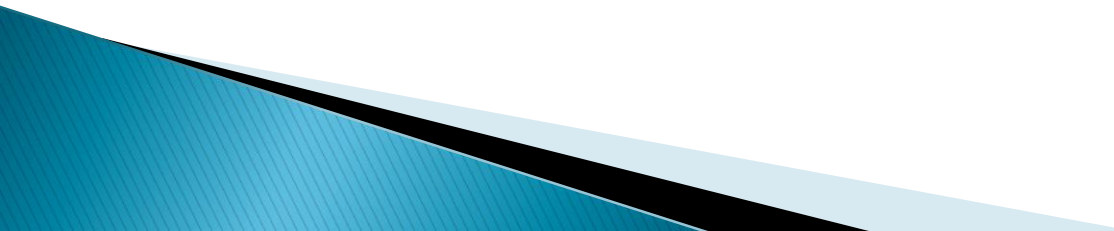
TIP: Try to limit your press release to one page.



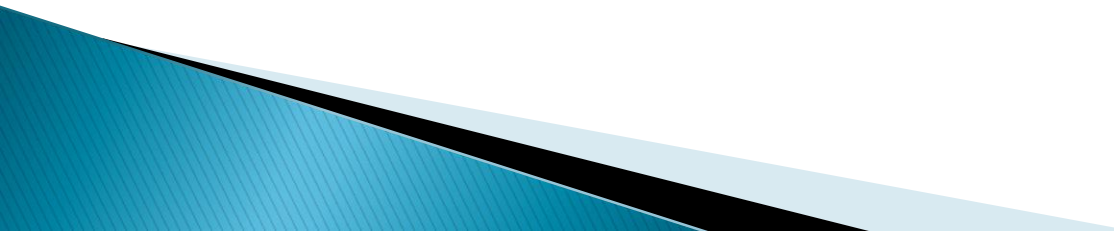
Example second paragraph

(edited from the same press release from the Free Library of Philadelphia):

The festival, a free celebration that aims to promote literacy, will feature more than 60 of the biggest names in writing and publishing. Best-selling authors Lee and Bob Woodruff (“In an Instant: A Journey of Love and Healing”), Terry McMillan (“Waiting to Exhale”) and Mary Higgins Clark (“I Heard That Song Before”) will participate in discussion panels. For a full list of participants, visit www.freelibrary.org. ...



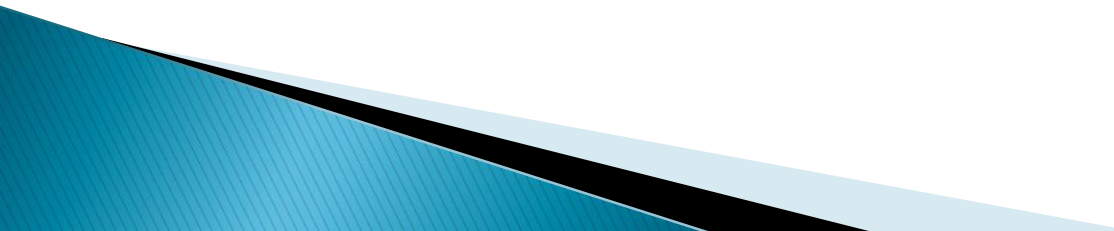
Wrapping up

- Work in a quote from an authority figure. Make sure it adds to the story. Is it interesting or just fluff?
 - Don't forget to link to an online photo gallery and add an info box!
 - Mark the end of the press release with ### or -30-
 - Finish with your company information, also known as a boilerplate.
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Example Boilerplate

(edited from the same press release from the Free Library of Philadelphia):

The Free Library of Philadelphia system consists of 49 branches, three regional libraries, the Central Library, and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. With more than 6 million visits annually, the Free Library is one of the most widely used educational and cultural institutions in Philadelphia. Visit our Web site at www.freelibrary.org or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/FreeLibrary.



Keep it clean

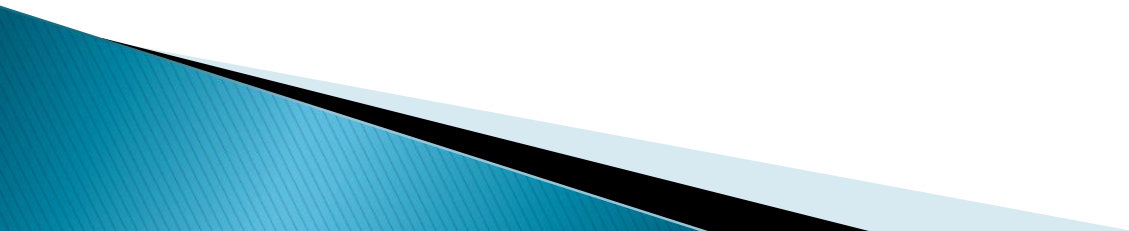
- Strong nouns
- Active verbs
- Simple sentences
- Varied sentences
- Transitions
- Correct grammar
- Correct punctuation

- Brevity
- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Spelling
- AP style


TIP: Avoid using hype words. You'll be taken more seriously if you don't call your program "exciting" or "fabulous."

Send it off!

Remember: Most of the time, you'll be sending your news release to local media outlets.



Submission Guidelines

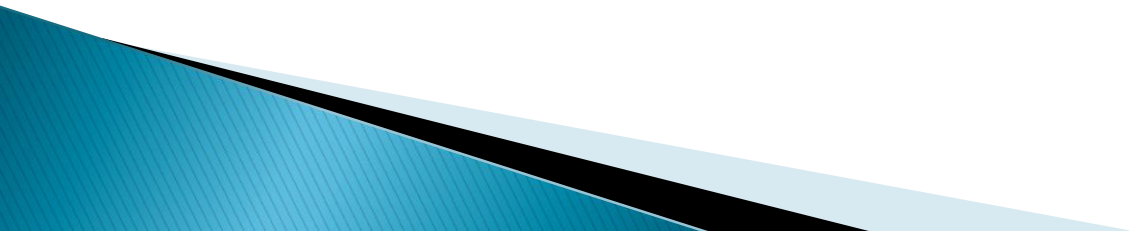
- Stick to the media outlets that will reach your target audience.
 - Send your press release 4–6 weeks in advance of an event (you can update if you get any bites) or ask about deadlines. Send it immediately after breaking news, bad news, announcements, large donations, etc.
 - E-mail is probably your best bet. Be specific in your subject line. Start off with a friendly note to the editor. Your release should be in HTML format and include links. Avoid huge attachments.
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Helpful resources

- Cleaning Your Copy (Poynter NewsU):
http://www.newsu.org/courses/course_detail.aspx?id=nu_cleancopy04
 - Free Library of Philadelphia press releases:
<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/PressRel/Pressrel.cfm>
 - New York Public Library press releases:
<http://www.nypl.org/press/>
 - Library of Congress press releases:
<http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2009/index.html>
 - Georgia State University press releases:
<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwexa/news/>
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Try writing your own!
Good luck!

Special thanks to Dr. Ondrusek,
Dr. Meehan and Dr. Marcie Hinton of Middle
Tennessee State University.



Now it's your turn . . .

- » Use what you have learned to:
 - create a press release
 - work on an advocacy approach