

Getting Noticed: Writing Press Releases and Media Advisories

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As an organization seeking media coverage, you are competing with the many other media advisories and releases coming across the editor's desk at a media outlet every day. Media outlets include newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and websites. These outlets have a limited amount of time and space to cover relevant issues. What makes yours special? What will make an outlet want to cover your story over someone else's?

Defining Terms

- **Media Advisory:** used to alert and invite media to an upcoming event for coverage.
- **Press Release:** used to report on an issue or event, usually after it has happened. Should be accompanied by appropriate photos if possible. Please note: language from a press release can be published by a media outlet verbatim.

Simple Rules for Getting Noticed

1. Be compelling
 - Your announcement is competing with many others in the newsroom — you need to have a news hook.
 - Advisories/releases with breaking news or those with a local angle are more likely to get covered.
 - Ask yourself: What makes my issue special and unique? What makes my issue urgent and important? Highlight these points in your announcement.
2. Neatness counts
 - If your announcement is sloppy or contains errors, your organization appears unprofessional.
 - Always print your release or advisory on organization letterhead to show your legitimacy.
 - Reporters are busy people and won't waste their time covering events of groups they don't take seriously.
3. Phone it in
 - After you email your advisory or release, it is a good idea to follow up with a personal phone call to the specific reporter you hope will cover the story.

- Ask if they received the release/advisory and then quickly pitch your story (summarizing the release). Ask if they have any questions and if they will be covering the story.
 - Be brief; reporters are busy people and are usually under deadline in the afternoon.
4. Persistence counts
- If a reporter doesn't show up for your event, don't take it personally. Time conflicts happen, but it doesn't mean your story still can't get printed.
 - Email media outlets a copy of your press release and pictures from the event as soon as it is over. Then follow up with another phone call to see if they got the release or have any questions.

Writing a Great Press Release

Note: The NYC Parks Press Office is available to review media advisories and press releases for community groups holding events in a local park. Media Advisories and Press Releases should be sent to the Press Office no later than 72 hours prior to the event. Contact your community engagement coordinator for more information.

1. Use the Inverted Pyramid
 - Put the most important and substantive information first and the least important information last.
2. Be accurate
 - Quotes and numbers from a press release (not media advisory) can be reprinted in articles, so make sure your facts are correct and that you have permission to quote people.
 - Be honest and don't inflate details — you will lose credibility if you do.
3. Be personal
 - Quotes help to personalize and add validity to your issue. Try to include quotes from at least two different individuals.
 - When using quotes, always include the title of the person you are writing about.