READ ME: WRITE AN EFFECTIVE PRESS RELEASE

Reporters receive hundreds of press releases each day. Your challenge is to make yours stand out from the crowd so that it actually gets read. In a nutshell, a press release is a brief news story that gives reporters key details about a piece of news. (See the **Press Release Template** for more information).

Make sure your release is newsworthy. Only send out a press release when you have actual news to report. For example, a press release is appropriate to announce a newly installed officer, the results of a successful program or event, etc. And it needs to be released immediately after the news happens. (For more information, see **Assess the News.**)

Attract attention with a strong headline. The headline is what a reporter reads first and determines if he or she will keep reading. The headline should give the most newsworthy angle of your story in no more than 12 words, mostly strong nouns and active verbs. Avoid the overused "X organization announces" headline — it's nearly a guarantee that a reporter will ignore the rest of the release.

Consider using a sub-headline. Because the headline is so short, the sub-headline (also called the dek) allows you to offer another piece of information that will sell your story. This is valuable real estate, so avoid repeating words from the headline. The dek takes the form of one full sentence, no more than 15 words, without any ending punctuation.

Tell the story in the lede. The lede, or first paragraph of the release, needs to answer the questions "What happened?" and "Why should anyone care?" in one to two sentences. Stick to factual statements that are not loaded with fluffy adjectives. This is where you get the reporter to commit to reading the rest of your release.

Flesh out the body with key details. The remaining paragraphs of your release will add the important details of your story. Here's where to address or expand on the who, what, when, where, and why of your story, with an emphasis on its impact on the community. Keep paragraphs relatively short, two to three sentences, and your overall length to one page.

Include quotes from key spokespeople. Within the body of your release, include one to three quotes. People quoted may include a local leader, member, or outside validator (a prominent member of the community, for example). Reporters may use these quotes directly. Ensure that the quotes sound natural — as if they were actually spoken — by saying them aloud.

Use letterhead and boilerplate text to identify NCJW. Consistent use of letterhead and boilerplate text (short text at the bottom of a release that describes NCJW) will help journalists know the source of the release. It will also save you from using valuable space in the body of the release.

Always include contact information. Near the top of the release, include a name, phone number, and email address of a person whom a reporter can easily contact for additional information.

NCJ☰®

National Council of Jewish Women
Sample Section

National Council of Jewish Women
Sample Section
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Month XX, 20XX

Contact:
Name
XXX XXX XXXX; name@ncjwsection.org ——

Include a 24-hour phone number.

STRONG HEADLINES CAPTURE MEDIA ATTENTION ——

The headline should be no more than 12 words. Use bold font, 2–3 points larger than body text.

New research reveals reporters rely on dek for key information ——

The sub-headline (or dek) should be no more than 15 words. Use bold font, 1 point larger than body text.

City, State — **The first paragraph is the lede or main news.** This is what is happening and why it is important, in one to two sentences.

The second paragraph is everything important that did not fit in the first paragraph. After reading the lede and the second paragraph, a reporter should know the who, what, where, when, and why of your news, as well as the so what.

"The third paragraph is **a passionate quote** from the best messenger," said Jane Smith, president of the National Council of Jewish Women Sample Section. "It is usually two parts and may state the problem and a solution or action." ——

The first quote in a release is generally from an organization's lead spokesperson. Make sure it sounds natural and adds value to the story.

In the **next two paragraphs**, share details that flesh out the story. Provide the larger context to this issue, including any relevant history. Consider using this paragraph to debunk myths or correct misinformation.

The goal of these two paragraphs is to give the reporter everything he or she needs to write the story. This is a good place for important facts, a key statistic, or even a brief anecdote.

"If space permits, use **another quote** here," the instructors said. "This will be important when working in a partnership or coalition." ——

One or two additional quotes in the release can come from allies, an event speaker, a member, etc. You can also include a second quote from your primary spokesperson.

From here, expand your story by including information that was not essential to grab the reporter's attention, but is critical to understanding the story. Ideally a release is one page, though it may extend to two if necessary.

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These marks indicate the end of the press release.

NCJW is a volunteer organization, inspired by Jewish values, that works to improve the quality of life for women, children, and families and to ensure individual rights and freedoms for all through its network of 90,000 members, supporters, and volunteers nationwide. ——

This is the boilerplate. Use it to include standard information about NCJW.