



## **PRESS RELEASES**

### **What is a press release?**

- A press release is the provision of information to a selected media like newspaper, magazine, radio or television.
- The information generally satisfies public curiosity, announces a public service or presents facts from a given situation.
- ***With this in mind, there are two types of press releases: advance and follow-up.***
  - 1) Advance releases, as the name implies, are released in advance of an event.
    - They announce the event and/or serve as reminders in support of other advertising efforts.
  - 2) Follow-up releases present news that has happened.
    - They are beneficial in reporting the results of a philanthropic effort, a chapter accomplishment or in reporting a positive trend in the Greek system.

### **How should I write a Press Release?**

The release should be brief and should be geared to answer *who, what, where, when, why* and occasionally, *how*. In preparing your press release, remember the following:

1. The information included should be appropriate to the medium to which it is sent.
  - Do not bother editors with material you know they cannot use.
  - It is best to contact the service editor for any questions pertaining to any guidelines.
2. The contact person from your chapter should provide his or her name, title, organization, address, and phone number in case the editor has any questions.
3. A release line should also be included at the top of the page indicating the date for release. If the release is distributed in advance, the release should read, "Hold for release..."
4. The standard format for most press releases calls for the use of 8-1/2" x 11" paper, double-spaced copy, wide margins and copy on only one side of the paper.
5. Releases, which run more than one page in length, should carry a page number at the center top of each page beginning with the second.
  - Each page should end with a complete sentence in case the pages are separated.
  - To indicate that the material is continued on another page, "MORE" is generally typed at the center at the bottom of the page.
  - Usually "-30-" is typed in the center at the bottom of the last page of a release to indicate the end of the copy.
6. When photographs are included with a release, they should always include the caption line glued to the bottom of the border with rubber cement.
  - The name, address and telephone number of the contact should appear on the back of the photo.
  - In most cases, the photo should be black and white for the best reproduction.

## Writing Announcements

### How is an announcement different from a Press Release?

An announcement is a brief statement to the public (including media) that does not really qualify as a news item but that may be of interest to a sub-set of the outlet's audience.

### What is necessary when writing an Announcement?

- Most print publications have columns that list things like upcoming events (social, business, etc.), people in the news, new employee appointments, school and military news, even home sales and police actions.
- Write your announcement very briefly, in the formula of the targeted column or publication, and fax or e-mail it about three weeks before you want the item to run.
- If you want the general public to attend an event you are hosting, be sure to send information to any calendar of events listings in your local newspapers.
- Allow plenty of time – at least three to four weeks before you want it to appear.

## The Ten Commandments of Press Releases

- 1) Thou shalt be selective with the releases thou sendest. Don't waste your ammunition on every little story possibility. Stories that bore you can bore reporters as well and leave a bad taste in their mouth.
- 2) Thou shall not send multiple copies of the same release. It can cause confusion and waste time. If you do your homework and send it to the right department, your story has a good chance of being selected.
- 3) Thou shalt have contact names and phone numbers on all releases. Reporters must be able to contact someone who can clarify information. Generally use two contact people and include business and home phone numbers.
- 4) Thou shalt know deadlines. It's a good idea to let reporters know what is coming. This way they can properly plan for it and do some homework.
- 5) Thou shalt follow up with a telephone call. The follow up call should just be a check to see if the release was received and if it is in the right department. Don't try to determine if it will be used -- doing so disturbs the press.
- 6) Thou shalt take "no" for an answer. If, after having given it your best shot, the answer is "no," forget it. Don't be offended, and don't take it personally.
- 7) Thou shalt find out about standard criteria. Be familiar with the different media you will be selecting. Promotions and position changes occur frequently. Also know which department reports which types of stories.
- 8) Thou shalt know and respect the meaning of "exclusive." This means giving the story to one medium at the expense of all other media. Reporters who get burned tend to remember.
- 9) Thou shalt not send releases to people who left the publication years ago. Editors tend to frown upon mail addressed to a displaced, or sometimes deceased, predecessor.
- 10) Thou shalt get to know reporters before needing one. Develop a working relationship with a contact person in each of your desired media. They might not use all of your releases, but it helps to treat them like people. Using them as speakers at "Guest Night" can help.

## Writing Press Releases

Consider the following when writing your press release:

- A. Summarize** the news in the first sentence or two – the lead paragraph – and/or include the following in the first two paragraphs:
1. Who – said or did something
  2. What – was said or happened
  3. When – it was said or happened
  4. Where – it was said or happened
  5. Why – it was said or happened
  6. How – it was said or happened, if appropriate

For example: Members of the University of Texas chapter of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity (who) move back (what) this weekend (when) into the chapter house, 2308 Nueces, (where) which has been rebuilt following the fire last December 23, that caused \$500,000 worth of damage (why).

- B. Incorporate Facts** in descending order of importance, known as the inverted pyramid technique, to:
1. Enable readers to get the most important information even if they only read part of the story.
  2. Permit editors to cut stories from the bottom if time or space is limited without omitting crucial information.

- C. Be accurate and truthful.** Expect questions for clarification, verification and amplification, particularly if your news is controversial or unusual in any respect. A major error in a release puts the media on guard and one in print raises a question about your chapter in the public's mind.

- D. Be direct and objective. KISS - Keep It Simple and Short** – whether a word, sentence, or paragraph. Paragraphs are shorter, often one or two sentences, in a press release than in a college term paper.

1. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly – and superlatives, seldom if ever.
2. Use appropriate nouns and third-person pronouns – not we, our, you, or your.
3. Eliminate unnecessary information and facts.
4. Use direct quotes to add credibility and interest.
5. Don't editorialize; attribute opinion to someone.

- E. Be specific; say something.**

1. Give results, end products and outcomes.
2. Identify people fully. Use the full name for the first mention of a person; thereafter use the last name (with such titles as Dr., Rev., etc.).
3. In many cases, further identify a member by putting the name of his or her hometown after the first mention of his or her name. When reporting a list of names, such as new members, group all members from the same hometown to use the town name just once.

- F. Writing the lead**

1. The lead, or the first sentence or two, is the most important part of the press release.
2. A quick glance at the lead will tell the editor if your story is interesting.
3. The lead is the hook that entices the editor to consider your release.
4. Before writing the lead determine what is unique about the event in the release.
5. The summary lead is the most common lead.
  - i. It includes the 5 W's (who, what, when, why and how).

6. Although it is important to include all pertinent information early in the release, the most important elements need to appear in the first paragraph, and the rest can follow in logical order.

## Sample Press Release

August 1, 2001  
[Media Contact]  
[Address]  
[E-mail Address]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Local Delta Gamma chapter holds Anchor Splash™ event**

The State College chapter of Delta Gamma Fraternity will hold its tenth annual Anchor Splash™ on Saturday, August 14 at 2 p.m. at the campus natatorium. All proceeds will benefit the Local Elementary School for Children who are Blind and the Fraternity's international philanthropy project, Service for Sight. Twenty teams of Greek and non-Greek participants will compete in a series of contests, fund raisers and competitions, culminating at Saturday's pool events. Each team will swim relays — both traditional and novelty — and perform a brief synchronized swimming routine.

The Delta Gamma chapter has been collecting contributions. Donations will also be accepted at the door. Local Store and Local Shop sponsored the event and provided trophies and door prizes.

Delta Gamma Fraternity is an international women's fraternity, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, and consisting of more than 180,000 members. Delta Gamma's purpose is to foster high ideals of friendship among women, to promote their educational and cultural interests, to create in them a true sense of social responsibility and to instill in them the best qualities of character. The Delta Gamma Foundation guides members to "Do Good" in support of its philanthropic mission: sight conservation and aid to those who are blind and visually impaired.

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For more information, contact:

[Name]  
[Title]  
Delta Gamma, Alpha Alpha chapter  
[Address]  
Phone [(xxx) xxx-xxxx]  
Fax [(xxx) xxx-xxxx]  
E-mail [name@school.edu]

## Sample Press Releases

### Sample Advanced Press Release

Date: April 10, 2005

For Release: April 25-31

Contact: Frederick N. Freeman, Director of Administration  
FarmHouse Fraternity, XYZ Chapter  
1905 Any Street  
Any City, MO 5555-1905  
(111) 555-1905  
[ffreeman@FarmHousexyz.org](mailto:ffreeman@FarmHousexyz.org)

FarmHouse Fraternity is collecting cans of food for the Homeless Outreach of downtown City. Members of the fraternity will be going door to door from noon to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, 2005 in the area surrounding the university.

Residents who will not be home during this time may also leave cans of food at the following drop sites: Castleton Mall, University entrance, and at the Homeless Outreach of downtown. FarmHouse members will be identified with green t-shirts and will be standing by large barrels. There will be a competition for groups that donate the most to the campaign. The group that collects the most cans will be presented with a special plaque from the Homeless Outreach and FarmHouse Fraternity.

### Sample Follow-Up Press Release

Date: May 5, 2005

For Release: Upon Receipt

Contact: Frederick N. Freeman, Director of Administration  
FarmHouse Fraternity, XYZ Chapter  
1905 Any Street  
Any City, MO 5555-1905  
(111) 555-1905  
[ffreeman@FarmHousexyz.org](mailto:ffreeman@FarmHousexyz.org)

2,000 cans of food were collected last week for the Homeless Outreach of downtown City. This effort, sponsored by FarmHouse Fraternity, was supported by local residents in university's neighborhood and by local media.

The Homeless Outreach reports that this donation will help 250 homeless residents eat next week. However, donations are still needed to continue this valuable program. John Jones, director of the Homeless Outreach, can be contacted at (555) 555-1234. The Homeless Outreach has been serving City since 1986