



TASK 6: WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

ACTIVITY 1: WRITE A PRESS RELEASE FOR YOUR PRESSURE GROUP

OVERVIEW

Decide how long the press release needs to be (our suggestion is 200 to 400 words). If you are working with a partner or in a group, choose who will write each part. Who will edit the text and check for accuracy?

A good press release should be written in the style of the newspaper you hope will print it. This makes it easier for the journalists working for the paper to adapt what you've written. It's more likely to be accepted by a newspaper if it follows a 'newspaper style'

It's important to think about how it would appear in a newspaper.

- **key points – focus on the story and who, what, where, when, why, how**
- **length – 200 to 400 words**
- **style – in the style of a newspaper story or a simple announcement**
- **structure – build up the piece with clear sections and add more detail in each paragraph**

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OPENING

You should aim to write a very short version of the whole story in the opening line/sentence. Can you link in with something that's current or coming up in the near future or link it to your launch?

Who, what, why, where, when and how are key points to include. Generally these come into the first paragraph. The most important information should come first, with detail and less important content coming lower down in the story.

Look at these examples

Example One: The Animal Liberation Front

In an anonymous communiqué received by the North American animal liberation press office, activists from the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) claim to have rescued 20 rabbits destined for slaughter at blue chip farms, 268 hill top drive in fountain inn.

Example from the Animal Liberation Front, February 22, 2007



Example Two: Barnardo's

Actress Michelle Collins has joined Barnardo's in highlighting the plight of 3.8 million children who live in poverty in the UK.

Example from Barnardo's, 28/11/2007



Example Three: Barnardo's

Calling all film enthusiasts! Blockbuster actor, Andy Serkis, is hosting exclusive audience sessions at one of London's hottest film industry hangouts, the Soho hotel, next week (8 December 2007) in aid of children's charity Barnardo's.

Example from Barnardo's, 28/11/2007,



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KEY POINTS

Newspaper stories often use a 'four paragraph' structure. The first paragraph contains the main ideas and an overview of the story. The second focuses on why it is important. The third can give detail about the group and what the group does. The fourth can round off the press release with a dramatic or memorable message.

Look at the example below and think about the different styles - **sentence length, directness, strength of vocabulary and quotes**. Which works best?

Tenses – present tenses work best (you can use present perfect for past events, and present simple or present continuous for future ones). Compare Examples 2 and 3.

In Example 2 'Actress Michelle Collins has joined Barnardo's in highlighting the plight of 3.8 million children who live in poverty in the UK.' Barnardo's uses present perfect 'has joined' and quite formal vocabulary 'the plight of 3.8 million children'.

In Example 3 they use a very different style 'calling all film enthusiasts' and present continuous 'is hosting' because this story is about a future event and should appeal mainly to children.

Active voice is better than passive voice in a press release.

Compare... 'Michelle Collins has joined Barnardo's
with... 'Barnardo's has been joined by Michelle Collins'

Which is better and why?

Use a direct style.

Compare... 'Actress Michelle Collins has joined Barnardo's in highlighting the plight of 3.8 million children who live in poverty in the UK.'

with... 'Barnardo's has been joined by Michelle Collins' who will highlight the plight of 3.8 million children who are living in poverty in the UK'

Which is better and why?

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Stick to the point and don't introduce your own ideas – report what has happened/is happening.

Compare...

'Actress Michelle Collins has joined Barnardo's in highlighting the plight of 3.8 million children who live in poverty in the UK.' This is excellent news for all those poor children who live in a very unjust world.

...with Example 2. Which is better and why?

Nominalisation – it's usual to use the name of a group as if it were a person

e.g. 'Barnardo's announces', or 'the ALF announces'.

'The ALF struck the Blue Chip Farm Inc. in Fountain Inn, SC after giving warning of impending action due to failure to cease and desist the slaughter of rabbits for food and fur.'

Example from the Animal Liberation Front, February 22, 2007



Keep things event based – try to be sure and include an event, as the examples do.

'The ALF struck...'

'Michelle Collins has joined...'

'... if you have a killer question...book your tickets now...'

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CLOSING

Be sure to close with details of where or when will the event occur and state the significance of the event. Short and dynamic sentences work best here.

‘Press officer Linda Greene remarks: "it looks like some people will kill anything for a profit. Thousands of rabbits are suffering and killed needlessly at the hands of callous people... so they can line their pockets. Anyway, the last thing Americans, known for their obesity and high levels of heart disease and stroke, need is more animal flesh high in fat and cholesterol." ‘

Example from the Animal Liberation Front, February 22, 2007



Too much detail can be boring.

‘The free exhibition will be held at the Bargehouse, South Bank, London, and will open on Tuesday, December 11, 11am to 6pm daily, until Sunday, December 30. The final day will be Monday, December 31, between 11am and 4pm. It will be closed December 24, 25, 26.’

Example from Barnado’s, 28/11/2007



Telling people what to do works well.

‘So if you have a killer question to ask King Kong or want an insight into the dark world of the lord of the rings outcast Gollum, book your tickets now by contacting Wanda Pearce on 020 8498 7527 or by email at wanda.pearce@barnardos.org.uk. Tickets must be booked by 6 December 2007.

Example from Barnado’s, 28/11/2007



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YOUR PRESS RELEASE