

How to Format a Press Release (General)

A press release is an opportunity to present MSA in a highly professional manner. Be sure to proofread your press release BEFORE you send to Joell for final approval.

When you format your release, follow these rules:

1. Keep the total length under 2 pages, ideally 400-500 words
2. Avoid using “I”, “we”, or “you”
3. Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Calibri
4. Bolded, larger headline
5. Body text should be single spaced, with one line of space between paragraphs
6. Use standard 1 inch margins and white paper

Press Releases (101)

How to get started:

Press releases follow a well-defined format that helps simplify the writing process and creates simplicity and uniformity for the reader.

1. **Logo:** The first thing you should put on your press release is the MSA logo at the top center of the page. If you are emailing your press release, it’s a good idea to include a high-resolution copy of your logo as a separate file also.
2. **Contact Information:** Below the logo, you can put your contact information along the left margin. Some people opt to put their contact information *after* the body paragraphs. Whether you choose to put your contact information first or last, it should look like this:

Contact: John Smith

Tel.: (123) 456-7890

Cell Phone: (123) 456-7890 (Optional)

Email: john.smith@email.com

Website: www.smithauto.com

You may also want to include certain social media contact information such as a twitter account or Facebook page.

3. Release Date: Not all press releases contain a release date, but if you decide to include one, put it at below your logo on the right margin. This should either say “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”, or “FOR RELEASE ON <date> AT <time>”.

4. Headline: The headline is your first chance to grab your reader’s attention and inspire them to keep reading. You should keep your headline short and to the point. Try to stay within the 80-170 characters range, and use language that is clear and easy to understand.

Remember, you’re trying appeal to a journalist, so you don’t need to “plug” the school right away. The headline can serve to set up the big picture story into which you can weave your business later on. It should be centered, use a larger font than the body text, and be bolded.

5. Sub-Headline: The sub-headline is optional. It is written directly below the headline. It gives you the opportunity to further develop your story angle, but should not repeat information already presented in the headline.

6. Dateline: The dateline presents the location and date of the article, and is separated from the first body paragraph by a dash. The location should be spelled out in all capitals. It should look like this:

WOODBURY, MN, September 1, 2016.

7. 1st Body Paragraph: The first body paragraph should present the *who, what, when, where,* and *why/how* of the press release. This should act as a short summary that gives the reader a general idea of what the whole story is about. You should stick to the facts here, and avoid hyping or trying to sell your products or services.

8. Remainder of Body: The remainder of the body paragraphs serve to complete the story you have introduced in the headline and 1st body paragraph. Be sure to write in a journalistic style so that media outlets can use your text as-is. You can use the second paragraph to provide background context for the article. Use short paragraphs (2-4 sentences), and feel free to include statistics, hyperlinks, media content and quotes.

- **Media Content:** Part of the body can include different types of media content, such as photos, videos, and audio clips. Be sure to also include the original files so that your media contacts can use these clips if they wish. Media content can help you stand out on both social media and search engines.
- **Quotes:** You can use separated block quotes to highlight certain aspects of your story. Quotes can help add another perspective other than the writer’s.

9. Boilerplate: The final paragraph in your press release should be the boilerplate, which presents information about the school and what is unique about the school. This should be a factual description, and it can be used repeatedly in different press releases. Really a “standard” statement about MSA.

Example of a Boilerplate that could be used:

Math and Science Academy is a Public Charter School located in Woodbury, MN. Our mission is to offer intense math, science and technology experiences and challenging opportunities in the arts and humanities. To develop lifelong learning skills, including critical thinking, leadership skills, volunteerism and collaboration with peers.

10. End notation: If your press release uses two pages, the first page should end in with “-more-“ centered at the bottom of the page. Your final page should end with three pound signs, like this:

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11. Final Note: Once you have ended the text of the press release, it’s a good idea to put one final note at the bottom that encourages someone who would like more information to reach out to you. Something like:

“If you would like more information about this topic, please call <Name> at <Phone number>, or email <email address>.”

How should you distribute your press release?

All Press Releases MUST be submitted to Joell Pundsack for final review and appropriate approvals. Again, they should be “ready” to Submit. Please note that in order to get an article in for the Woodbury Bulletin, it should be submitted to Joell by TUESDAY the week PRIOR to publication.

Woodbury Bulletin editor@woodburybulletin.com (Mathias Baden). Email is preferred communication. A phone follow up can be important if you are requesting coverage of an event. The Woodbury bulletin is a weekly publication – Wednesday is the publish day. DEADLINE for Press Release should be the Thursday prior to publication by 5:00pm.

****As a general rule, MSA should strive to Submit a Press Release a **MINIMUM of ONE (1) time per month.** Staff and Students know what is considered the most “news-worthy”. Highlighting upcoming events, past events, student achievements, etc. Newspaper students could be a great partner in writing these releases. They should follow the Press Release Guidelines as noted before submitting to Joell. In addition, it is suggested that a “Link” is added to Daily Announcements when an article is published.****