



HELPFUL HINTS FOR WRITING A PRESS RELEASE, A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR AN OP-ED

PRESS RELEASE

When you want to publicize an event or activity, you can send a press release to our local newspapers. These are short pieces that follow journalistic rules for news; thus they should include the “5 Ws,” meaning details as to Who, What, When, Where, and Why. Needless to say, press releases should publicize a newsworthy event.

There is some flexibility in format, but the following is applicable to most situations.

Start with **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** centered at the top, in all caps.

Under this, type the **Dateline** which lets the publisher know that they are receiving the most updated information.

Provide a **Compelling Headline**. This should be well articulated and eye catching to make the person want to read on. A good headline is specific, direct and easy to understand, and uses the active voice.

Next is the **Introduction**. The first paragraph is the most important paragraph because it contains a summary of the press release. Most publishers only bother to read the first few lines of this paragraph. Give it everything you have to say.

The **Body** consists of two to several paragraphs explaining every detail of information you want to share. Be sure to include:

- Who is involved.
- What exactly is happening.
- When it’s happening.
- Where it’s happening.
- Why it matters.

Make it more interesting by using statistics or strong and memorable quotes from someone in the organization or from others who are valued voices. If relevant to the situation, you can also include photos, infographics, videos, or graphs or charts.

The **Boilerplate** is a short paragraph in which you provide information about the organization: who you are, when you were founded, what is your vision, and so on.

Finally, end with a **Call To Action**. This is the final element of an effective press release. Give the reader a clear call to action to let folks know what you want them to do.

Don't forget to include **Media Contact Details**. An effective press release should contain your contact information: your name, phone number, and email address.

End with the traditional three hashtags. Use **###** to signal that the press release is finished.

Remember to use proper grammar, spelling, titles, and style. Give it a try!

**** Thank you to Michelle Moore of SharpSpring, Ariel Hyatt of CyberPR, Team NewsVair ****

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR AN OP-ED

What's the difference between a Letter to the Editor and an Op-Ed?

- LTE = short (250 words), is a response to a specific article or event
- Op-Ed = longer (750 words), not necessarily a response to specific event

Which is preferable for you to write?

Op-Ed is better, it's longer and can be more detailed and nuanced, and because it helps you reach wider audience, it demonstrates that there's public concern about an issue, it puts a personal face to the issue, and it gets attention from legislators

What makes an Op-Ed effective?

- Make it "Wide Us, Narrow Them." --Focus on constituents, issues, lived experiences.
- Provide facts and figures. --Don't linger on your opponents' arguments.
- Know your audience. --End with a call to action.

How would you start?

- Connect to a current event or another piece of media (this is your lead, your hook).
- Rework a piece of conventional wisdom. --Ask a question, then answer it with your thesis.

How do I go about getting published?

Try a LTE first (because you don't have to pitch an LTE) For an Op-Ed, a successful pitch is 1) timely, 2) well-written, 3) brief and clear, 4) conveys expertise, and 5) communicates an unexpected point of view. It should answer these questions: Why now? Why should people care? Why should it be me writing about it? Include your piece with your cover letter email or as an attachment. Ask editor to respond within a time frame. Then, if you don't hear from the editor, follow-up! (ask if you're pitching to the right person)

**** Thank you to Act on Mass for providing training material. ****

PUBLICATIONS

Dailies

Worcester Telegram & Gazette (Halifax Media Group) *Serving Worcester County*

- Letters should be emailed to letters@telegram.com with "The People's Forum" as subject line; or sent via U.S. Mail to Telegram & Gazette, 100 Front St., Floor 5, Worcester, MA 01608-1440.
- Letters can be up to 250 words, except for political endorsements, which can be up to 100 words. Writers can have a letter published every six weeks.
- They publish virtually every letter as long as they can confirm authorship, the letter is in good taste and not libelous, is comprehensible and, in the case of handwritten letters, legible. Material may be libelous if it holds a private person or organization up to hatred, contempt, suspicion of wrongdoing, scorn or ridicule.
- They do not publish anonymous letters or letters with pseudonyms. In confirming authorship they require the writer's full name, a home and mailing address, and a phone number for verification of authorship as well as to contact for questions.

Worcester Telegram & Gazette (continued)

- They reserve the right to edit letters for clarity, for good taste and for brevity. They also reserve the right to put a close to repetitive conversations. They review letters about active court cases carefully.
- Letters must be original. Quotations should be clearly attributed. Generally, they do not publish reprints, extended quotations, open letters or letters that have appeared elsewhere.
- Letters should be of general public interest. They do not publish strictly personal letters, including those about damaged or missing property or pets, consumer complaints or on personal religious beliefs. They do not publish letters written in verse or essay form.
- The deadline for receiving endorsements on federal, state and municipal elections is generally the Wednesday before Election Day.

Springfield Republican/MassLive.com (Newhouse Newspapers) *Serving Hampden County and the Pioneer Valley* **Opinion editor:** Robert Genest **Guidelines:** Readers may submit a letter to Letters to the Editor, The Republican, 1860 Main St. Springfield, MA. 01101, or letters@repub.com. Your full name, address and telephone number must be included. Addresses and phone numbers will not be printed or appear online. Letters to the editor will appear in Thursday and Sunday editions, but may appear on MassLive at any time. Letters should be concise, no more than 250 words. Letters may be edited for clarity and length. They welcome op-eds from the community on topics that are relevant to our region. Op-eds should be no longer than 750 words and may appear in both the Republican or MassLive. Particular attention will be given to local topics that are well-written and concise.

Non-Dailies (in our area published by either Stonebridge or Turley)

Auburn News (Stonebridge) *Serving Auburn and surrounding communities* To send press releases, calendar items and information to Stonebridge Press publications, email directly to the editor at news@stonebridgepress.news. Include contact information in case there are questions.

Deadline for submission: Monday at 4 p.m. for the current week's edition.

Barre Gazette (Turley) *Serving: Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Oakham, Petersham, Rutland* **Contact:** Ellie Downer, 413-967-3505, edowner@turley.com

Guidelines: email as either a MS Word document saved as text only, or pasted directly into the form on their web page. The Barre Gazette welcomes news tips, story ideas, photo submissions, sports results, calendar items and letters to the editor. They will respond to all email messages received.

Deadline for submission: Monday at noon for the current week's edition.

Charlton Villager (Stonebridge) *Serving Charlton & surrounding communities.* To send press releases, calendar items and information to Stonebridge Press publications, email directly to the editor at news@stonebridgepress.news. Include contact information in case there are questions.

Deadline for submission: Monday at 4 p.m. for the current week's edition.

Palmer Journal Register (Turley) *Serving: Palmer, Monson, Brimfield, Holland, and Wales* **Contact:** Elise Linscott at 413-283-8393, elinscott@turley.com **Guidelines:** Send via email as a MS Word document saved as text only. The Journal Register welcomes news tips, story ideas, photo submissions, sports results, calendar items and letters to the editor. They will respond to all email messages received. **Deadline for submission:** Monday at noon for the current week's edition.

Quaboag Current (Turley) *Serving: Sturbridge, Brookfield, West Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, New Braintree.* **Contact:** Eileen Kennedy, 413-967-3505, ekennedy@turley.com
Guidelines: Send via email as either a MS Word document saved as text only, or paste directly into the form on their web page. OR Send opinions to: Letters to the Editor, 80 Main Street, Ware, MA 01082. The Quaboag Current welcomes news tips, story ideas, photo submissions, sports results, calendar items and letters to the editor. They will respond to all email messages received.
Policies: Letters to the Editor should be 250 words or less in length, and guest columns between 500 and 800 words. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. They require that the person submitting the opinion also include his or her home telephone number, because they authenticate authorship prior to publication. They reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, or defamation of character.
Deadline for submission: Monday at noon for the current week's edition.

Southbridge Evening News (Stonebridge) *Serving: Southbridge and surrounding communities.* **Contact:** news@stonebridgepress.news To send press releases, calendar items and information to Stonebridge Press publications, email directly to the editor. Include contact information in case there are questions. **Deadline for submission:** Monday at 4 p.m. for the current week's edition.

Spencer New Leader (Stonebridge) *Serving: Spencer, Leicester, the Brookfields*
Contact: Brendan Berube, Editor, 508-909-4106, news@stonebridgepress.news **Guidelines:** Email or mail your letter to Spencer New Leader, PO Box 90, Southbridge MA 01550. **Policy:** You'll need to provide your name and place of residence, along with a phone number, so they can verify the letter is yours. They don't have a set limit, but if you keep it around 600 words or so, you're going to have a better chance of seeing all your words in print. If you want to write a bit longer about a particular issue, maybe a guest "Your Turn" column is your cup of tea. If you do that, try to keep it between 700-800 words. Remember, libelous remarks and/or personal attacks are a no-no and could lead to your letter not being published. **Deadline for submission:** Monday at 4 p.m. for the current week's edition.

Sturbridge Villager (Stonebridge) *Serving Sturbridge and surrounding communities.*
Contact: news@stonebridgepress.news To send press releases, calendar items and information to Stonebridge Press publications, email directly to the editor at news@stonebridgepress.news. Include contact information in case there are questions. **Deadline for submission:** Monday at 4 p.m. for the current week's edition.

Ware River News (Turley) *Serving: Ware, Warren, Hardwick, and Gilbertville*
Contact: Eileen Kennedy at 413-967-3505, warerivernews@turley.com **Guidelines:** Send via email as a MS Word document saved as text only. Ware River News welcomes news tips, story ideas, photo submissions, sports results, calendar items and letters to the editor. They will respond to all email messages received. **Deadline for submission:** Monday at noon for the current week's edition.