

## PR to Print: Getting your issue in the newspaper

# Daily Herald

of Chicago's Northwest and West suburbs

- It's a lede, not a pitch:

Give the basic who, what, where, when and why in the first graph, not quotes, opinions, flowery speech. The more you write like a reporter or editor, the better they will respond to it.

- Put your release in context:

There are a hundred good stories that don't get done each day because there isn't enough time. Why is your story important to our customers? Why is it important today?

- Timing:

Send your release in the morning, as opposed to afternoon when people are less likely to be in the office, and try to target the slowest news day. Monday mornings and Thursdays tend to be slower than other days. Ask the media outlets you're targeting what their planning day is and time your release to coincide.

- Headline style:

Headlines on press releases, much like stories, will catch a reader's eye. It's a critical first impression, and your release should "dress" for the meeting. The more objective your headline, the better it will be received. Avoid multiple headlines and type styles.

- Writing style:

Be as concise and clear as possible, avoiding inflammatory or overly flowery language. Avoid lengthy quotes that read like you wrote them instead of someone actually saying them. The better you write, the less someone will have to work to understand your point and rewrite. Try writing your release and then rewriting it using monosyllabic words (use vs. utilize).

- Little things count:

Follow basic grammar, punctuation and journalism style rules. The cleaner your copy, the more credible a source you are. Would you trust someone who couldn't spell to explain a complicated issue to you?

- Be useful:

Offer alternative sources for information on the issue you're pushing. Links to other organizations Web sites, for example. Breakout time, date and place and contact info unobtrusively at bottom.

### Common errors

Which sentence is correct?

1)

- a. I hope this has a positive effect in our writing.
  - b. I hope this will positively effect the way we look to readers.
- 2)
- a. I think this grammar test is worth it's weight in gold.
  - b. It's the best test I've ever seen.
- 3)
- a. You're an amazing public relations expert.
  - b. All you're press releases sing.
- 4)
- a. Sally faced the dilemma of picking between chocolate cake and chocolate ice cream for desert.
  - b. Sally was in a quandary about whether to take her lottery winnings in one lump sum or annual payments.
- 5)
- a. The principle interest on this account is 42%.
  - b. I'm going to stick to my principles.
- 6)
- a. It's nice when friends compliment each other.
  - b. It's nicer when friends complement each other.
- 7)
- a. Susan Thomas compared winning the award to a "dream come true. This is what I've worked so hard for."
  - b. Susan Thomas compared winning the award to a "dream come true."  
"This is what I've worked so hard for," she said.
- 8)
- a. Bob vowed to boldly go where no man has gone before.
  - b. Bob vowed to go boldly where no man has gone before.
- 9)
- a. She liked the training session because it was filled with great examples.
  - b. He thought the training session was too long since it lasted for eight hours.
- 10)
- a. If worst comes to worst, you can walk out in the middle of the session.
  - b. By in large, it was an interesting training session.

- 1) a; affect is the verb and effect is the noun (remember it by saying A verb; E noun)
- 2) b; "Its" is the possessive form of "it."; "It's" is a contraction of "it is."
- 3) a. "Your" is the possessive form of "you"; "You're" is the contraction for "you are."

4) b; “Quandary” (not quandry) is a perplexing situation or position. “Dilemma” (not delimma) is a perplexing situation where one must chose between two unpleasant alternatives.

5) b; “Principal” is a school leader, base mount of money owed or first in rank or importance. “Principle” means fundamental truth, a rule of conduct or scientific law.

6) Both can be. Compliment means to praise; complement means to complete something.

7) b; AP style says don't merge partial quotes into a single quote. It also creates an inaccuracy since she only compared the award to a dream not a dream and the second sentence.

8) Either is fine. A lot of English teachers taught us to never split an infinitive (put a word between the to and an infinitive). The root of this rule is in Latin, where infinitives were never split. But in Latin, infinitives are single words so they can't be split. Write what “sounds” the best.

9) a (and note there's no comma before because in this case); Use “because” when there is a specific cause-effect relationship. Use “since” when the first event logically led to the second.

10) both are wrong; it's “worse comes to worst” and “by and large.”

#### Additional resources:

American Copy Editors Society ([www.copydesk.org](http://www.copydesk.org)) has quizzes on its Web site to test your skills.

Poynter's Web site ([www.poynter.org](http://www.poynter.org)) has online editing and writing tips.

No Train No Gain ([notrain-nogain.org/Train/Train.asp](http://notrain-nogain.org/Train/Train.asp)) offers a variety of journalism training tips.

The Slot ([theslot.com](http://theslot.com)) is a Web site maintained by Bill Walsh of the Washington Post on grammar, style and headline issues.

AP Stylebook

Webster's NewWorld Dictionary