

Everyone likes to read about his or her company or organization or see his or her views in the pages of the community newspaper. You may have a special event that you want to be sure the community knows about. Or you may wish to respond to a comment or story that ran in the paper. Perhaps you would like to lend your expertise, or pass on an important safety reminder to the community.

This guide will give you the basics of working with your local editor, so that you can “get your story out” in the fastest, simplest way. It answers your basic questions about how news makes it to print, how to contact your newspaper and how to present your information.



A copy of this brochure can be personalized and downloaded from NNA's website

www.nnaweb.org

Making News



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PUBLICITY BASICS

- ❖ Only one person from your organization should be the contact person with the newspaper.
- ❖ It is often said there are three rules of journalism: accuracy, accuracy, accuracy.
- ❖ Write everything down, check the spelling of names and never trust your memory.
- ❖ Get your story to the newspaper as soon as possible. Know the newspaper's deadlines. Whenever possible, let the newspaper know about an event before it takes place.
- ❖ Use creativity. If you have an idea for a feature story, suggest it. Newspaper editors appreciate fresh ideas.
- ❖ Never try to obtain publicity by pressure of friendship or business connections.

WHAT IS NEWS?

Editors choose news coverage according to the importance of an event to their communities. A fire, a crime, or an accident is important, but so is the award your organization gave last week.

Company awards, new employees, new programs or projects, unusual actions, social events, milestones, athletic events, benefits that need public support and member participation in local, national or world events are all of interest to your community newspaper editor.

PACKAGING

Your local newspaper sees a constant barrage of paper and e-mails. You are already one step ahead if your news release or story is obviously local. However, remember that the typical editor must make quick decisions regarding newsworthiness. As a newspaper reader you know that your reading decisions are based first on the headline, and then on the first paragraph of the news item.

Give the most important information first. Be sure to give the "who, what, when, where and how" of the story right away.

Background material should come last.

Include the name and the contact at your organization and a phone number at the top of the page or e-mail for quick reference. When submitting a story to your local newspaper, ask what format it prefers to receive such information: e-mail, fax or mail. If it's by mail or fax, type your release double spaced on one side of a 8-1/2 x 11-inch sheet of paper. Start about one-third of the way down the paper on the first page and leave ample margins. Number your pages. When you are done, type this symbol: # # #

WRITING

Use simple English. Never use fancy words or terms that only a member of your organization or industry would understand. Read the local newspaper to learn its style. Most important, be honest, impartial, accurate and brief. Never use a quote unless it is direct and accurate and always identify your sources.

Remember that there can be different writing styles for different parts of the newspaper. Use "I" only in letters to the editor or opinion columns. Give more description in feature stories. Keep your news writing to the point, with the most interesting and important information first.

DEADLINES

Pre-planned events should always reach the editor's desk well before the last-minute rush. Learn your newspaper's deadlines and keep as far ahead of them as possible. It is always best to stop by or call the newspaper office after the last issue has been published, rather than just before the presses roll.

Remember that there will be times when an editor or reporter is simply too close to deadline to talk to you.

THE OPINION PAGE

When you write letters to the editor, always include your name, address, affiliation (if any), and phone number. As a matter of accountability, and to protect the newspaper from

irresponsible letter writers, newspapers rarely publish a letter without this information. If you have an opinion, remember that the opinion or editorial page is considered the property of the public—it's your page, so feel free to use it.

Editors appreciate receiving your views for this page.

PHOTOS

Editors are always seeking good photo opportunities. If you think your story merits a photo, talk to the editor about it. If a newspaper photographer cannot make it to your event, make a photo yourself and include it with your story or release. If you are sending your photo by e-mail, be sure to find out what format the newspaper prefers—JPEG, TIFF or EPS.

Always try for an action shot, rather than posed photos. If Jane Doe, for example, has been presented an award for winning a forklift safety competition, a photo of Jane at work would be much better than one of the owner presenting her with an award. Write the cutline or description of the photo on a separate piece of paper rather than on the back of the photo, and list names left to right. For e-mailed photos, include the cutline information in the body of the e-mail. If you send more than one photo, be sure to identify which cutline goes with which photo.

MAKING NEWS

Chances are if you follow deadlines, concentrate on accuracy and maintain a good relationship with your editor, your information will make it out to the community.

This guide was developed by the National Newspaper Association, representing more than 2,200 newspapers.

