

PRNews

WRITERS BOOTCAMP



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Handouts

CHECK OUT THE CHECKLIST*

Before starting

- I understand the assignment and have answers to all my questions regarding it. I know where or to whom to turn should new questions regarding the assignment arise.
- I have answers to issues of who? what? where? when? why? and how?
- I have all the relevant information regarding my assignment and have it at hand for reference as I write.
- I know what I want to have happen as a result of this piece of writing.
- I know the purpose of what I'm writing, whether it's to request, recommend, persuade, explain, report, announce, or something else.
- I know who my readers are.

Audience

- I avoided "like, duh" moments
- I used a tone and vocabulary appropriate for the audience.

Introduction/Lead

- I provided a road map for my readers so they know exactly where this is going
- I involved my readers immediately, showing the clear, immediate significance of my topic.
- I answered the question: "Why should I read this?"
- I whetted my readers' appetite to keep reading.
- I avoided unnecessary words, clichés, and jargon.
- I kept my lead to one idea; my lead says "I know what this piece of writing is about."

Paragraphs

- I checked to see that each paragraph has a topic sentence.
- Each paragraph has its own reason for being—each with a single idea.
- My paragraphs are the right length, not too short nor too long. And of varied the lengths

Organization

- There is a logical flow to the information I'm presenting.
- I used transition sentences or words appropriately between paragraphs.
- I eliminated unnecessary jargon and substituted plain English.
- I eliminated meaningless wordiness (i.e., "in regards to," "at this point in time").
- When using pronouns like *he*, *him*, *she*, *her*, *they*, *them*, *it*, *which*, or *that*, there are specific words earlier in the text to which they refer.

Correctness

- I checked for common errors such as "there" and "their" and "affect" and "effect."
- I have no run-on sentences.
- I checked for spelling but didn't assume "Spell Check" would pick up all of the errors.
- I checked a reference book for things about which I'm unsure (capitalization, punctuation, etc.).
- I double-checked the spelling of all names, places, titles, company names, and other proper nouns.

Readability

- The paper is laid out effectively and uses reader-friendly aids (e.g., subheads, bullets, etc.).

___ All contact information is included and placed where it can be easily found.

* These are all "if appropriate"

“SOCIALIZE” YOUR RELEASES ...

Making releases more social is a smart communications tactic. And it’s easy. When you distribute your release on the wire:

- **Make use of the “share” functionality with your distributed release. (When you use a professional distribution service, you can often embed your release with sharing functionality.)**
- **Tweet the headline**
- **Post a brief summary of the news on Facebook**
- **Create a call-to-action on Facebook or Twitter (a coupon, contest or giveaway)**
- **Repurpose the release on your corporate blog**
- **Post related videos or photos on YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Pinterest**
- **Post the release in your company’s online newsroom**

Source: <http://blog.marketwire.com/2012/01/09/5-quick-and-easy-ways-to-make-your-press-releases-more-social/>

STOP THE MADNESS!

Businessisms the world can do without

unique
seamless
seamlessly integrated
soared
synergistic
robust
solutions
turnkey
best-of-breed
mission critical
leading
interactive
value-added
utilize
highly seasoned
facilitating
strategic
leverage
alignment
brand architecture
going forward
implementation

proactive
empowered
organic growth
best practice
granular
bandwidth
industry-leading
next-generation
world-class
unmatched
innovative
paradigm
paradigm-shifting
revolutionary
wide-ranging
solution provider
integrated
thought-provoking
incremental
spot
concepting
... and did I mention “unique”?

**WRITE THE HEADLINE LAST.
IT'S THE HARDEST THING ABOUT A RELEASE.**

Compelling headlines:

- Include the most important information (like company or program names).
- Contain the keywords people are likely to search for online.
- Make the reader want to learn more.
- Gets a reader's attention quickly.
- Are written in present or future tense – just like a news headline.
- Are written in third person. Not the second person or command form.

To write good headlines, you must read good headlines.

LEAD YOUR READERS WHERE YOU WANT THEM TO GO

John McPhee said leads are the “flashlight that shines into a story.”

Here are some questions you might ask yourself as you begin to develop the perfect lead.

- What one thing does the reader need to know more than any other?
- What would make the reader say to someone else, “Listen to this!”
- How and why did this story happen or piece of information develop?
- How can I summarize the information?
- What’s the story behind the story?
- Who will be affected by this information? How will they be affected?
- If I ran into a friend on the street, how would I tell them this news?

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell readers something they don't already know• Seize the readers' attention• Consider the bigger picture• Be concise• Use the “breath test”• Add a human touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead with whens and wheres• Congratulate yourself

**WRITE THE BODY OF THE NEW RELEASE
AS IF IT IS A NEWS STORY**

- **Now's your chance to tell your story.**
- **Like any news story, the purpose is to provide your reader with information.**
- **Elaborate on who, what, when, where, why and how.**
- **Written well, media may lift this information directly from your release.**
- **Add details to your story that support your claim, add interest, or reinforce what you are trying to say.**
- **Include quotes from key staff, members or subject matter experts, along with statistics or other interesting facts.**
- **Avoid: robotic language, clichés, business lingo, pretentiousness, self-congratulation**

PROOFREAD, THEN PROOFREAD AGAIN

1: Hard copy: Always proof from a hard copy – don't proof from your computer screen; you'll miss many errors this way.

2: One thing at a time: Complete one task before starting the next:

- Check for errors in the spelling of names and places.
- Check the accuracy of phone numbers, dates, addresses, times, etc.
- Check for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
- Check for transposed characters, omitted letters, words, and word division

3: Time after time: Allow time between writing a document and proofreading so you can return to it with a fresh mind and eye.

4: Details, details

- Check that table of contents page numbers and headings match with the copy in the document.
- Check that abbreviations have been defined at first use.
- Look to see that all your bulleted or numbered lists are formatted similarly.
- Ensure that dates and days of the week match – if copy says Tuesday, Nov 7, make sure Nov. 7 is a Tuesday.

5: Know thyself: If comma placement confounds you, go through the paper checking just that one problem, etc.

6: True colors: Use a colored pen so your corrections stand out.

7: Sound check: Read it aloud – your voice will note awkward phrases and punctuation and diminish the familiarity you might feel having written the document.

8: Trading places: Get a fresh perspective by proofing away from your desk – a conference room, an empty cubicle, the reception area.

9: Search party: Use the search function of the computer to find common mistakes: it's/its, your/you're, their/there/they're, etc.

10: Proof and proof again: After proofing, proof the revised document – check that all corrections were made, read to ensure you didn't miss anything the first time 'round!

THEN ONCE MORE JUST TO BE SURE