

Press Release Basics

Journalism 101

Newspaper news stories are generally written in an “inverted pyramid” format that places information in the story in a hierarchy of importance. That way if the story needs to be edited later for length, copy editors can start at the bottom and avoid lopping off important facts. Feature stories may stray from this format but are also generally given more real estate on the page.

Who is your audience?

Who will benefit most from your research? Mothers or other family members? Teenagers, middle schoolers or younger? The more specific you are, the easier it will be to target media most interested in your research.

Answer the question “SO WHAT”?

Journalists get numerous emails and phone calls a day pitching stories. They are looking for unique perspectives and stories grounded in individuals.

It’s all about the story-telling.

Would someone involved in the research be willing to discuss how your research impacted them with a reporter?

Visuals tell the story.

Is there a visual that will help tell the story? Think about your research process to discover key junctures where a photographer could take a photo that would help tell your research’s story.

Your new best friends.

Does your institution have a marketing, communications or public affairs or public relations office? The stories around your research can help them promote your institution to prospective students, donors, and policy-makers. Keep them up to date on what you’re doing and possible photo and story opportunities well in advance. They will need time to plan to help you most effectively.