

Section II: Strategic Writing in Public Relations

I. Strategic Writing in Public Relations (pp. 41-42)

1. What is the definition of public relations?
Public relations is the values-driven management of relationships with publics that are essential to an organization's success.
2. Is public relations the same thing as publicity?
Public relations certainly includes publicity (media relations)—but it includes much more, including employee relations.
3. What is the two-way symmetrical model of public relations?
The two-way symmetrical model focuses on researching and communicating with target publics to build productive relationships that benefit both sides. In this model, the organization recognizes that sometimes it needs to change in order to build a productive relationship.

II. News Release Guidelines (pp. 43-50) **Also see following sections.*

1. Most news releases are written as ready-to-publish stories. Name two documents within the broad category of news releases that aren't prepared in ready-to-publish formats.
Answers could include social media news releases, media advisories and pitches.
2. What must the subject line in an e-mail news release do?
A good subject line is newsworthy, specific and concise; it shows journalists that the related e-mail contains news of interest to their audiences.
3. In a good, newsworthy news release, the first sentence of the text covers – what?
A good newsworthy first sentence often concisely covers *who*, *what*, *when* and *where*.

III. Announcement News Releases (pp. 51-53) **Also see II above.*

1. What is “inverted pyramid” organization?
The lead (the opening paragraph) covers the most important aspects of *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how*. The information in the story becomes progressively less important. The least important (but still newsworthy) information comes last.
2. What verb tense do announcement news releases usually use?
Announcement news releases usually are written in past tense.
3. Besides poor writing, why might journalists reject an announcement news release?
The news media may also reject a news release if it's too promotional or lacks local interest.

IV. Feature News Releases (pp. 54-55) **Also see II above.*

1. How do feature news releases differ from announcement news releases?
The feature news release focuses on “softer,” less important and less immediate news than does the announcement news release. Feature news releases often are human-interest stories that highlight some aspect of your organization. Feature news releases are not as common as announcement news releases and traditionally attract less media attention.
2. Does a feature news release use the inverted pyramid form of organization?
No. Feature news releases use storytelling skills, so they’re not inverted pyramids, as are announcement news releases. The most dramatic paragraph in a feature news release might be the final paragraph.
3. What verb tense do feature news releases usually use to attribute quotations?
Unlike announcement releases, feature news releases often use present tense to attribute quotations—for example, *says* instead of *said*. Present-tense attributions can help create the sense that a story, not just a report, is being told.

V. Hybrid News Releases (pp. 56-57) **Also see II above.*

1. Why is this kind of news release called a hybrid?
They are called hybrids because they begin like a feature news release but quickly become an announcement news release.
2. Does a hybrid news release have a featurish conclusion?
No. After the featurish lead, the hybrid news release follows the inverted pyramid organization.
3. When might a hybrid news release be used instead of an announcement news release?
The hybrid news release can be ideal for a hard-news story that has a whimsical or human-interest angle—for example, a student group’s sponsorship of a “weird pet tricks” competition for charity.

VI. Social Media News Releases (pp. 58-61)

1. Who is the audience for social media news releases?
Bloggers and online journalists.
2. What are the traditional internal headlines within a social media news release?
News Facts, Quotations, Multimedia, Related Links, About [Organization Name], and For More Information
3. Should social media news releases be promotional and opinionated?

Social media news releases deliver objective facts. Opinions appear only in the attributed quotations.

VII. Media Advisories (pp. 62-64)

1. When is a media advisory appropriate?
It is appropriate in two situations:
 - a. The news is extremely timely—so-called breaking news—and you must get the information to the news media as quickly as possible. You don't have time to write a news release.
 - b. You want to remind journalists of an important, previously sent news release.
2. Are media advisories prepared in a ready-to-publish format?
No. A media advisory is a *what, who, when, where, why, how* outline of a news story.
3. What kind of headlines does a media advisory usually have?
The traditional media advisory begins with a traditional news headline.

VIII. Pitches (pp. 65-69)

1. Do reporters prefer to receive pitches via telephone?
A recent survey by PR Newswire and *PRWeek* magazine showed that almost 90 percent of journalists and bloggers prefer to receive pitches via e-mail, as opposed to phone calls or social media such as Twitter or LinkedIn.
2. Is a pitch sent to many journalists at the same time, like a news release?
Unlike news releases, a pitch is sent to only one journalist. A pitch is an exclusive offer to a particular journalist.
3. What should the first paragraph of an e-mail pitch do?
Hook the journalist with the first paragraph. Write the first part of your letter as if it were the lead of the story that you hope the journalist will write.

IX. Video News Releases (pp. 70-75)

1. Who is the primary target of a video news release?
The primary target audience of a VNR is a television or cable station. Before you can reach the viewers the VNR is ultimately targeting, you must gain the approval of those stations' reporters and editors. However, with the advent of social media outlets such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, VNR producers are able to reach out to a highly targeted audience on the Internet and wireless devices.
2. Why is the use of video news releases considered controversial?

In 2005, the Government Accountability Office reported that under some circumstances, VNRs produced by federal agencies violated laws against the unauthorized use of public funds “to produce propaganda.” The Federal Communications Commission also has issued an advisory telling television stations that they must disclose the source of any VNR material they broadcast.

3. Why do the authors of your textbook advise you to “think again” before using a video news release as a tactic?

Before investing the time and expense of producing and distributing a VNR, make certain that this tactic fits within your organization’s overall strategy. Always ask if a VNR is the best way to achieve a desired goal. Are there legitimate reasons why news organizations would not be able to generate the same footage and interviews on their own? When stations commit their time and resources to covering a story, they are more likely to air it. The worst reason for doing a VNR is because you can. There must be more to it than that.

X. Media Kit Guidelines (pp. 76-77)

1. Media kits can contain a variety of documents, but what document *must* they contain?

Media kits must contain at least one news release.

2. Name four traditional documents that a media kit could contain.

A news release, a backgrounder, a fact sheet and a photo opportunity advisory.

3. In public relations, what is the difference between a press kit and a media kit?

There’s no difference. Media kits often are called press kits, a term that no longer seems appropriate. Today, we get news not only from print news media (which use a printing press) but also from television, radio and the Web. The term *media kit* is more accurate than press kit.

XI. Backgrounders (pp. 78-80)

1. Is a backgrounder a news story?

No. Backgrounders are not news stories. They do not have news leads or news headlines. They supply interesting, relevant background information for an accompanying news release.

2. Are backgrounders written in ready-to-publish formats?

Yes. Backgrounders are written in a ready-to-publish format.

3. Is it all right for backgrounders to be more promotional than news releases?
No. Like a news release, a backgrounder should not include unattributed opinions. The tone should be objective. Any opinions should be attributed to clear and credible sources.

XII. Fact Sheets (pp. 81-83)

1. Are fact sheets written in ready-to-publish formats?
No. The traditional fact sheet is a *what, who, when, where, why, how* outline of the accompanying news release.
2. Why include a fact sheet in a media kit when the kit already contains a news release with all that information?
Some editors prefer this stripped-down presentation to the news release. Broadcast editors may prefer fact sheets because they're not written as newspaper stories. Other editors may prefer fact sheets because, by listing only facts, they avoid the subjectivity that many editors fear lurks in news releases.
3. What kind of headline should a fact sheet have?
A fact sheet generally has exactly the same headline as the related news release.

XIII. Photo Opportunity Advisories (pp. 84-86)

1. Can photo opportunity advisories include promotional writing?
Unlike most other media kit documents, photo opportunity sheets can have promotional writing. Even the headline of a photo opportunity sheet can be promotional and subjective.
2. In what way is a photo opportunity advisory like a fact sheet?
Like fact sheets and media advisories, photo opportunity sheets are single-spaced, with double-spacing between paragraphs. Photo opportunity sheets include the two-column format of a fact sheet, focusing on *what, who, where, when, why* and *how*.
3. Are photo opportunity advisories distributed before the related event – or after the related event?
Photo opportunity sheets are distributed before the related event.

XIV. Newsletter and Magazine Stories (pp. 87-94)

1. Straight news stories should inform. What is the purpose of feature stories?
Like straight news stories, feature stories inform—but they also entertain. Storytelling skills are important in features.

2. In a feature story, what is a nut graf (nut paragraph)?
A nut graf isn't a feature story's first paragraph, but it does come early in the story—usually right after the lead paragraph or paragraphs. The nut graf tells what the story is really about. It links the lead to the big idea, the main point, of the story. A nut graf comes early in a feature because you don't want readers wondering about the exact subject of the story.
3. What is the “gold coin theory” of feature writing?
The gold coin theory asks you to imagine that readers fear your feature story is a dusty, uninviting path that they must walk. Tempt your readers by frequently dropping gold coins onto the path. Gold coins are bits of entertainment; they are fascinating anecdotes, great quotations, incredible facts, something that makes readers laugh or cry—anything that rewards the readers for reading.

XV. Annual Reports (pp. 95-98)

1. In the United States, who requires companies that sell stock to issue annual reports to their stockholders?
In the United States, the federal Securities and Exchange Commission and most stock markets, such as the New York Stock Exchange, require companies that sell stock to issue an annual financial report to their stockholders.
2. In an annual report, what important section generally follows the opening charts and graphs?
The message from the CEO, sometimes called a letter, which focuses on the achievements of the past year and thanks employees, stockholders and other groups that have helped the company work toward its goals.
3. Do public relations writers write the “Management’s Analysis of Financial Data” section of an annual report?
Not usually. Financial personnel from a company usually will prepare this section, and it will be verified by an outside accounting agency. Public relations personnel might help edit those long explanations. They should be sure to confirm their edits with the company’s legal and financial teams.

XVI. Speeches (pp. 99-104)

1. What new, key element – besides purpose, audience and media – must speechwriters consider in preparing a speech?

Speeches have a speaker—and that speaker often is not the speechwriter. In other words, the speeches you write often will be delivered by someone else. Therefore, besides studying the purpose of the speech and the audience for the speech, you also must study the speaker. Your script must sound like the speaker at her best—not like you at your best.

2. What elements of a paper script for a speech make the words easy to see and to read?
In a paper copy of a speech, triple- or quadruple-space between the lines. Use large type and wide margins. Type only on the upper two-thirds of each page so that the speaker's chin doesn't dip too low as she reads.
3. What are the five sections of the traditional "why" speech?
Introduction, explanation, main point, remarks, conclusion.

XVII. Websites (pp. 105-108)

1. Eyetracking studies show that the eyes of most website readers move in what pattern when they scan a site?
Eyetracking studies by Jakob Nielsen, a Web usability researcher, show the dominant reading pattern on the Web looks somewhat like the letter "F." First a user reads horizontally across the upper part of the content area. Next, he moves down the page and reads a second time horizontally across the page, typically covering a shorter area. Finally he scans down the left side.
2. What do website readers examine first on a site: visuals or headlines?
Headlines.
3. Should website text have short line lengths -- or long line lengths?
The normal reading distance the eyes can span is only three inches wide or approximately 12 words. Line lengths should be short.

XVIII. Blogs (pp. 109-111)

1. How are blogs interactive?
Blogs actively invite written responses, offering a Comments link to allow readers to agree, disagree or extend the discussion.
2. What often appears at the top of a blog, underneath the headline?
The date and time of posting.
3. Employees who write blogs on behalf of organizations should remember to do – what? – before posting?

Have each post approved before it goes online.

XIX. Podcasts (pp. 112-114)

1. Podcasts often have scripts that will be read and recorded. How can reading a script for a podcast create problems?
Scripts shouldn't sound as if they're being read. If the individuals featured in your podcast sound unnatural and awkward with a script, consider a less formal approach.
2. Please give an example of what a "time and title marker" might be for a podcast introduction.
Welcome back to *Tech Talk*, a weekly podcast from the software engineers at M-G-S Interactive Games. Today is May Thirteenth, Two Thousand Twelve.
3. Must podcast scripts use formal, flawless grammar?
Like a blog, a podcast generally uses informal and conversational language. However, podcast language is never needlessly ungrammatical, which could be distracting to many listeners.

XX. Microblogs and Status Updates (pp. 115-118)

1. Name some familiar websites associated with status updates and microblogs.
Facebook and Twitter.
2. What's the traditional maximum length for microblog posts and status updates?
The maximum length for Twitter tweets is 140 characters and spaces. Facebook status updates shouldn't exceed four sentences.
3. What symbol introduces a Twitter hashtag?
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