



NHFA
Press Kit
For Members

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Promoting Your Events

You've got a unique skillset and a message that only you can bring. Making sure that the public knows where to find you is critical. Don't rely on anyone else to toot your horn for you! You and you alone are your best press agent.

In publicizing your presentations, workshops, and other events, you'll need to spend a significant amount of time and effort. Make the most of your talent and time by following the basics of good public relations so you don't get bogged down in details or miss opportunities.

The following materials have been developed to help you streamline your efforts and make it easy for you to help others who are trying to help promote your event. When you book a presentation or event, offer to provide as much material as possible, and then follow through. For instance, if you book a 1-hour slide presentation for adult education, be prepared with:

- a pre-designed presentation poster that just needs time, dates, and location
- a PSA that needs the same
- a press release that just needs similar tweaking

Offer to send them to your contact person right away; then check up in a week to see how it went. If they haven't gotten the publicity off the ground, offer to help. Either way, it's your responsibility to stay on the timetable so your event will be well attended.

Writing a Press Release

Press releases are used for two things: to announce an event and, depending on how newsworthy you can make it, to promote an idea. Beware that newspaper editors will be screening your press release for several things, and whether you get published or not depends on how well you:

- follow the formula
- keep word count economical
- avoid proselytizing
- avoid references that appear to benefit a for-profit business or anyone personally
- promote the non-profit or educational/charitable aspect of what you are doing

Follow the Formula

Yes, there is a standard formula, and most newspapers insist upon it. The beauty of it is that it makes your job much easier, too. It may be a formula, but you don't have to be rigid in your tone or language. Make the most of what limited space and order you have to appeal to readers with the information they need conveyed in as personable (not personal) a way as possible.

The Headline

A good news release headline:

- provides information
- contains the keywords people need to get the point

- gets a reader’s attention quickly
- makes the reader want to learn more

Example: Home Funeral How-To Series Underway

The Lead Paragraph

The lead and first paragraph of a press release announces what you have to say, providing answers to as many of the critical “who, what, when, where, why your reader should care, and how” questions that are relevant to your story. Best practices are to keep the lead paragraph compelling and simple, foregoing a lot of adjectives for critical information. You should grab your reader’s attention here by simply stating the news you have to announce.

The Body Copy

Now’s your chance to tell your story. And, like any news story, the purpose is to provide your reader with information. Remember to keep your tone neutral and objective—like a newscaster vs. an advertisement. Add details to your story that support your claim, add interest, or reinforce what you are trying to say. These can include quotes, statistics, background information, etc. Keep sentences and paragraphs short, about three or four lines per paragraph. Remember that newspaper print is in roughly 2 inch columns, and one sentence can fill up a lot of space. Avoid lengthy paragraphs, as people tend to avoid or skim them.

Boilerplate Statement

By definition, boilerplate content is “a unit of writing that can be used over and over without change”. In the press release world, this is typically your “About the Company or Nonprofit” sentence or Mission Statement.

Final paragraph

Traditionally, the final paragraph of a news release contains an opportunity for the reader to get more information. Contact information provides the media and everyone else interested in what you have to say a way to reach you. It should include your company name, telephone number, Website and an email address.

The Summary

The summary paragraph is just that—a synopsis of the information contained in the release. The summary paragraph gives you the opportunity to provide a brief description of the information you are sharing. Some distribution points, such as calendar listings, will only display the basic information, so it’s good to have this ready along with your press release. This summary contains the title, time, date, location; cost, if any; contact phone, email, website, possibly 5-8 word description; and wheelchair accessibility if possible.

Example: Join the first in a series of six, one-hour presentations offered at the YourTown Library designed to teach the basics of conducting after-death care in the home. Learn about home

funerals Tuesday, May 14 at 7 p.m. To learn more, go to www.yourwebsite.org, or call your number. Wheelchair accessible, donations gratefully accepted.

Do's and Don'ts

The Do's

Start Strong

You only have a matter of seconds to grab your readers' attention, so you want to capture it with a strong opening. Your headline, summary and first paragraph should clarify your news. The rest of your release should provide the detail.

Identify Yourself

If your release does not identify the source of the information within the first few paragraphs, you may lose the promotional value your release can provide.

Write Professionally

If your release contains hype, slang, excessive exclamation points or some other common mistakes chances are it will be viewed as an advertisement rather than a news release, which may hurt credibility. Or worse, a media outlet may pick up your release and publish without modification, opening any sloppy writing to a larger audience.

Limit Jargon

The best way to communicate is to speak plainly using ordinary language. Using an abundance of technical language and jargon limits your reading audience.

Make Sure your Information is Informational and Timely

Think about your audience. Will someone else find your story interesting? Answer the question, "Why should anyone care?" Make sure your announcement contains information that is timely, unique, highlights something new or unusual, and provides useful information to your audience.

Avoid Clichés

You roll your eyes at clichés. So will your audience.

Pick an Angle

Make sure that your release has a good hook. Tying your information to current events, recent studies, trends and social issues brings relevance, urgency and importance to your message.

Use Photos

Attach logos, head shots, photographs.

Don't Be Afraid to Toot Your Own Horn

Don't Give Away All the Secrets

Provide links in your press release directly to the page on your Website where readers can learn the specifics about your news and then act upon it. If you give your readers no reason to click through to your site, they're not necessarily going to.

Stick to the Facts

Tell the truth. Avoid fluff, embellishments, hype and exaggerations.

Use Active Voice

Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Rather than writing "entered into a partnership," use "partnered" instead. Do not be afraid to use strong verbs.

Economize Your Words

Be concise. Editors sometimes reject news releases with overly long headlines, excessive lists and high overall word counts. Eliminate unnecessary adjectives, flowery language or redundant expressions.

Proofread

Several times, and at least once out loud. And ask someone else to go over your press release before sending.

The Don'ts

Here are a few things that should not be in any press release:

- all capital letters to emphasize anything
- exclamation points
- hyperbolic claims
- grammatical errors
- lack of content and substance
- advertisements or promotional/fluffy language
- the words "you", "I" or "we" outside of a quoted statement
- lists

Writing a Public Service Announcement (PSA)

Press Releases and PSAs are different in several ways. Essentially, PSAs are quick, to-the-point ads that announce community or charity events to support nonprofit organizations. Public radio and TV stations are required to dedicate a certain percentage of time to running PSAs.

Getting people to read a 3-4 paragraph press release is sometimes harder than giving them a quick blast, even if it doesn't include the flavor or detail you want them to have. A well-written PSA will give them just enough information to guide them either to your event, to your website that has more information, or both.

You may have 10 seconds to get your point across; if you're lucky, you'll get 30-40 seconds. Here is an example for each using the same event:

10 seconds: Join home funeral advocates this Saturday, May 3rd, for a demo and training session at 10 a.m. at the Congregational Church of YourCity. Check www.yourwebsite.org for details.

30 seconds: Have you or anyone you know experienced the disappointment of attending a cookie-cutter funeral service? Are you concerned about the environmental impact of today's funeral practices? If so, join others in our area who want to change all that. The Your Organization is holding a workshop and demonstration this Saturday, May 3rd, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the YourCity Congregational Church to teach the public how to care for our own loved ones after death. For more information, go to www.yourwebsite.org or call your number.

Finding & Contacting Local and Regional Media

Memorize this website address: <http://www.usnpl.com/nhnews.php> On this site, you will find every newspaper in your state and region, complete with links to the front page of each.

Newspapers want your information in two ways: by email or by online form. Gone are the days of running around with paper copies. The best way to find out their preferred method is to read their front page. Look for links that say something along the lines of:

- Submit a Press Release
- Send Us Your News
- Calendar Listings

If all you can find is a Contact Us page, look for the email address of the news editor. If all else fails, write to the Chief Editor and ask that your request be forwarded to the appropriate person.

Don't forget weekly circulars such as the Pennysaver for inexpensive ad space.

Submitting Your Press Release

Once you have written your piece, set it up on the page in this format:

PRESS RELEASE	5/5/2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE	
CONTACT: Your Name and Number	
	Title
Lead	
Body	
Summary	
Final	

If you are emailing, send as an attachment rather than in the body of the email, especially if you are sending photos or graphics of any kind.

For forms, have your original press release open and ready to copy in parts, and be prepared to modify as needed. Each form is different and asks for different parts in different places. Be sure you also have your summary paragraph, and a 100 character description of your program ready as well. Pay close attention to directions regarding where to put dates, times, and location.

Tools for Charting Your Progress

Make life easy for yourself. Make a master chart like the one below and list all your contacts with their information. As you prepare for an event, simply go through your list, combining what you can. Be sure to check off on the notepad what you have done and when as you send them out, as it's easy to forget or mix up who you sent things to, especially over a period of days. Keep track of who you spoke with and what else might be required.

PR Contact Info

Outlet	Method of submission	Email Address of Contact	Website Address	Time frame
<i>Your Town Newspaper</i>	<i>Email Online</i>	<i>editor@newspaper.com</i>	<i>www.newspaper.com</i>	<i>2 weeks before event for press release</i>
<i>Your Town Library</i>	<i>Email In person</i>	<i>librarian@library.com</i>	<i>www.library.com</i>	<i>4 weeks before event for monthly newsletter</i>
<i>Church</i>	<i>Email In person</i>	<i>admin@church.com</i>	<i>www.church.com</i>	<i>5 weeks before event for bulletin</i>
<i>Community Health or Activities List-serve</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>join the list serve and post your info any time</i>		<i>3-4 weeks before event</i>

PR Notepad

Outlet	Date of submission	Contact	Responses	Notes
<i>Your Town Newspaper</i>	<i>5/10</i>			
<i>Your Town Library</i>	<i>5/19</i>	<i>Assistant librarian</i>		<i>Check back next week</i>
<i>Church</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Talked with Sarah</i>	<i>Will post</i>	
<i>List Serve</i>	<i>5/19</i>	<i>posted</i>		<i>repost week before event</i>

Local Access TV

You'd be surprised how many people watch your local access TV just to find out what's going on. Many of them will run your posters (and your taped presentation!). Best way to submit to them? Prepare a PowerPoint slide by lifting elements of your poster and send it to your local access supervisor with an additional week lead time. To find out how to contact them go to your town or city's web page or call the administrative offices to learn who is responsible.

Sticking to Your Timetable

It's important to follow the timetable set by every news outlet. The standard used to be that you were required to submit press releases two-three weeks in advance of an event. Due to the ability to add items quickly and to hold them over for publication, the timeframe for submissions is much more flexible, but every publication has its own idea of what is an appropriate lead time. Look for it on their online submission pages and make a note of each.

Building a Contact Base

Newspapers and radio are not your only source of exposure. Cultivating relationships with organizations and businesses in your target community will go a long way toward getting good attendance and getting the word out. Start with your phone yellow pages and then go online to find the contact addresses for:

- Adult Education
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Civic Groups
- Conferences
- Co-operatives
- Churches
- Community Resource Facilities
- Eco and Wellness Fairs, Community Events
- Hospice in-services
- Hospital staff training
- Keynotes
- Libraries
- Panels
- Schools and Colleges
- Senior Living Facilities

Once you've determined who to contact, where, and when, you'll want to secure as permanent a presence as possible. You'll want to contact everyone for specific events with posters, press releases, and bulletin announcements, but take advantage of their interest by providing agencies and venues with your standard informational publications, too.

Informational Materials

Your Website

The single most important thing you can do to educate the public and increase their awareness of what you offer is a website. Funerals are a tough subject for most people, and giving them a safe place where they can ease themselves into the topic and what we hope will be a relationship with you is critical. Your website needn't be expensive or intricate. There are loads of providers that offer to host your domain while leaving you in charge of design. This means you can stay in control of your own content at all times at no additional cost. A simple design with 3-5 pages will give you the opportunity to explain your mission, give a little history and flesh out what you offer, and contain your contact information, plus links to others.

Top 12 Ways to Optimize Your Website

Design a site that is informative, attractive and will be easy to find by search engines by:

1. Creating a list of key words that describe what you do and what you offer.
2. Incorporating those key words into longer, more detailed key phrases.
3. Repeating them throughout your website. Make sure there is some version in every paragraph.
4. Being sure each title in some way contains key words or phrases and that each matches the content on the page.
5. Putting key words and phrases in footers.
6. Maximizing on-site linking.
7. Using topic and summary sentences in each paragraph just like your teacher taught you.
8. Never physically copy and paste text onto a webpage. Always write it out. And don't plagiarize other websites.
9. Renaming all images and include key words using dashes instead of spaces.
10. Avoiding too little or too much content on each page.
11. Layering your information by menu tiers, becoming more focused and detailed as they go.
12. Matching your URL, titles, images names, and text content with the same key words and phrases.

Some Suggested Key Phrases for Home Funerals

- Caring for our own at death
- Family-directed
- Family-led
- After-death care
- Noninvasive body care
- Green or Natural burial

Calling Cards

The least expensive item to print is a standard calling, or business, card. You can design and purchase a good quality card online at any number of sites, but keep in mind that your card design will be the basis for any other materials you develop. Be sure you choose fonts and graphics and colors you can easily duplicate to ensure consistency as you build your brand. Give these out like candy—they're cheap and the best advertising you'll get. Make sure your website address is clear on this and all materials, as the real purpose is to get them to that website and to you.

Writing Effective Brochures & Rack Cards

Trifold brochures and double-sided rack cards are great to have for events. Here are some basic tips for doing it right the first time:

- Pick your graphics carefully and be sure you have permission to use other people's photos, graphs, and quotes
- Be sure your text is accurate, inoffensive to everyone, persuasive, interesting and informative without overwhelming
- If you print them yourself, be sure to follow standard margin settings for trifolds, and use no less than a 32 lb paper. Nothing tells someone you can be trusted like professional-quality materials.
- It will show if you are trying too hard, too, so do your best to make your materials accessible, personable, and easy to read
- Avoid large blocks of text. Use brief sentences, short paragraphs, quotations, graphics and bullets to break up the density and still make your points.
- Keep the content focused on your main message
- End with contact info, a drive to your website, and most importantly, a call to action
- Use your brochure to drive the reader to your website
- **Know what type of brochure you are trying to write:**
 - Leave-Behinds—Named for the type of brochure you leave behind.
 - Point-of-sale—The type of brochure you may pick up while waiting in line at the bank.
 - Respond to Inquiries—Someone asks about what you do and you drop a brochure in the mail to them to follow up.
 - Direct Mail—Include your brochure into your direct mail package or with a letter.
 - Support Tool—Similar to leave-behinds but you use this type as an aid while speaking with an individual or group.
- **Know if your brochure stands alone:** Will someone reading this get the full message? Will someone who has heard you speak learn anything new from reading the brochure?
- **Know your audience:** Does the brochure really speak to the people you are trying to target? Is the print too large or too small? Is the language readily understandable or does it need to be simplified? Do the references make sense to average readers?

- **Organize Your Points:** Like a book, most people will look at the front cover, back cover, maybe even flip through the pages to see if it's worth reading. Include graphics, benefits or thought-provoking statements on the cover that motivate the reader to pick up and open it—and keep reading it.
- **Tell a persuasive story:** Paint a word-picture in which the reader can imagine him or herself actually making a home funeral happen. Use as much text as necessary but keep in mind The Dollar Rule: no text blocks larger than a dollar placed in any direction without being broken up by white space, graphics, or images. For this reason, most paragraphs in a brochure consist of one, maybe two max, sentences.
- **Sell benefits, tease out features:** List and describe the benefits and potential scenarios.
- **Maintain a consistent voice:** Consistent tone and message create credibility and trust.
- **Use charts, graphs, illustrations and photos:** Captions are the first thing read, so be sure they reflect your message. Try to coordinate color to avoid a chaotic look. And abide by The Dime Rule in photos: no person's head should be smaller than a dime.
- **Weave in testimonials:** Use them as callouts throughout the body copy to reinforce your points across your entire story. Box out if you need visuals.
- **Avoid visual confusion:** Use a maximum of two fonts in a brochure, and minimize color text. Usually black plus one accent color is sufficient; variations in tone of the accent color are permissible.
- **Make sure it has complete, accurate and thorough information:** Before you start hammering away at the copy in your brochure, take the time to really think about the information you want to include. Fact-find, do research, conduct interviews, and have readers give you feedback.
- **Know what your reader wants and needs:** Write your brochure or leaflet from the reader's point of view. That means the information must unfold in the right order. Begin by analyzing what your reader wants to know. A good way to organize your points is to write down the questions you think a potential customer might have, and the answers your brochure might supply.
- **Make it a keeper:** Putting helpful information in your brochure will encourage the reader to keep it, refer to it often or pass it on to other people. Include addresses and other contact info for yourself or others who may be useful in the future.
- **Make it personal:** An experienced speaker talking to a large audience will pick out a face in the crowd, and talk to that face. This connection with one person allows the speaker to make his talk more personal than if he were merely addressing a mass of faces. In a similar fashion, the words in your brochure should use this technique and

zero in on one imaginary single person. Why? Because writing in a direct “I’m-talking-only-to-you” style will increase response.

- **Add atmosphere:** Don't let your brochure sound aloof. Let your reader share your feelings. Let your words show them how they'll *feel* as a result of following this path.
- **Respect boundaries:** Remember, not everyone wants to be educated on every aspect. Nor does everyone want to know all the details. Don't waste their time telling them about things that don't convey a benefit.
- **Talk about your reader's needs:** Don't get carried away with your own interests. Talk about your reader, not yourself.
- **Give directions:** Every brochure should be organized so the reader can flip through the pages and easily find what they want. Provide clear signposts or headlines throughout the brochure and make sure each one says, “Hey, pay attention to me!”
- **Ask for action:** Regardless of how you organize your brochure, there's only one way to end it. Ask for action. It's not enough to be “informative.” By the end of the brochure, make it absolutely clear what readers need to do. Tell them to call and give them the number and business hours, the website, the names and addresses of others.

Pamphlets

Pamphlets differ from trifold and rack cards in that they are more spacious and usually geared more toward explanation and education rather than tantalizing and steering. Having how-to manuals, the FTC Funeral Rule, and other more lengthy, and hopefully free, publications will help add to your table offerings when attending fairs or other tabling events.

Posters

It's not easy finding public places to hang paper posters, but it's still worth the effort. Post it on your Facebook page, on your website, and send it to anyone you think might be able to help you pass it on to others as an attachment.

Poster design is pretty simple: you know what catches your eye as you're walking past a bulletin board. Be sure to include:

- large enough print in easy-to-read font (use a maximum of 2 fonts on the page)
- uncluttered layout (leave enough white space for eyes to rest so they can absorb the info)
- complete information—location, date, time, cost, etc.
- brief content paragraph or bullets
- eye-catching color that doesn't overwhelm the message
- one good graphic is enough!
- contact information
- sponsorship information
- website address

- if you are recognizing sponsors or advertising your own logo, put it (or them) at the very bottom

Retractables & Signs

Retractables are those vinyl displays that retract into a metal carrying case from a 6 foot height that you frequently see at fairs or in mezzanines. The average retractable is expensive, so it behooves you to design it with care as it will need to last you a long time and speak generally enough to go to a variety of functions and events and still be relevant.

Often it is easiest to develop your rack card or brochure first, then distill your message even further to bullet points and graphics that will really get someone's attention from a distance. Consider that you will probably be using this tool at times in crowded spaces, with people milling about. You have to grab their attention and keep it, enticing them to approach you to learn more.

Reading & Resources Lists

There are all kinds of lists out there, and all kinds of material, and people are looking to you to steer them in the right direction so they can learn more. Be sure to have a printed sheet or postcard that lists the top resources they can access themselves, and include your contact information so they can come back to you or your website for more.

A Word About Printing

There are lots of options out there for printing, but when you get into the nitty-gritty of producing printed materials, nothing substitutes for an experienced graphic designer/printer. The more you do yourself, the less design work, and therefore project costs, will be. But no matter how much design work you do, it is worth every penny to have a printer review and adjust your work before going to press.

Print jobs, especially for large runs such as brochures, cost first by the set-up charges, and then by the volume. For instance, 250 brochures may cost \$130, and 1000 of the same brochure may cost \$180. The more you order, the lower the price, as you are only paying for paper and ink after the initial set up is complete. Also be aware that you will probably not receive the exact amount you order. Expect a 5% +/- margin.

Items such as business cards, printed tablecloths, simple print jobs are reasonable to consider printing from online businesses. A quick Google search will point you in the right direction.

Best Public Speaking Book Ever: *Confessions of a Public Speaker*, by Scott Berkun