

Press Release Content Tips

When referring to content, this means the news being expressed. Pay attention to the content of your press release. Keep the following points in mind when writing a press release:

- **IS YOUR NEWS “NEWSWORTHY?”** The purpose of a press release is to inform the world of your news item. Do not use your press release to try and make a sale. A good press release answers all of the "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why), providing the media with useful information about your competition event, organization or competitors. If your press release reads like an advertisement, rewrite it.
- **START STRONG** Your headline and first paragraph should pretty much tell the story. The rest of your press release should provide detail. You have a matter of seconds to grab your readers' attention. Do not blow it with a weak opening. Get straight to the point!
- **WRITE FOR THE MEDIA** On occasion, media outlets, especially online media, will pick up your press release and run it in their publications with little or no modification. Journalists will also use your press release as a springboard for a larger feature story. In either case, try to develop a story as you would like to have it told.
- **NOT EVERYTHING IS NEWS** Your excitement about something does not necessarily mean that you have a newsworthy story. Think about your audience. Will someone else find your story interesting? Let's assume that you have just spent a lot of effort to launch a new race. Announcing your event debut is always an exciting time for any promoter, but to the media it is just another local race. Instead, focus on the unique features of your event. Answer the question, "Why should anyone care?" and make sure your announcement has some news values such as timeliness, uniqueness or something truly unusual. Avoid generic clichés such as "the most exciting race on the East Coast" or "watch the region's top cyclists." Focus on the aspects of your event that truly set it apart from others, using FACTS and stating specifics! *I.e. A 2009 UCI World Championship qualifier, the Colorado Springs Cyclo-cross Championships will bring 150 of the world's top riders to Colorado, including hometown heroes and world-championship-medalists Katie Compton and Alison Dunlap. The pair will go head-to-head for the first time on a man-made course designed to challenge top pros right in the middle of downtown Colorado Springs.*
- **STICK TO THE FACTS** Tell the truth. Avoid fluff, embellishments and exaggerations. Journalists are naturally skeptical. If your story sounds too good to be true, you are probably hurting your own credibility. Don't make ridiculous claims on attendance, number of vendors, etc. or you may not be respected in the future.
- **PICK AN ANGLE** Try to make your press release timely. Tie your event to current events or social issues if possible. Make sure that your story has a good news hook.
- **USE ACTIVE, NOT PASSIVE 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 as well.
- **BE CONCISE** Use only enough words to tell your story. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language or redundant expressions. If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it. Wordiness detracts from the readers' attention. Keep it concise. Make each word count.
- **BEWARE OF JARGON OR CYCLING TERMS** While a limited amount of jargon will be required if your goal is to optimize your news release for online search engines, the best way to communicate your news is to speak plainly, using ordinary language. Jargon is language specific to certain professions or groups and is not appropriate for general readership. If you are hoping to appeal to mainstream media, avoid the overuse of cycling jargon!
- **GET PERMISSION** People and especially organizations are very protective about their reputation. Be sure that you have permission before including information or quotes from any outside individuals or organizations.
- **ABOUT YOUR EVENT** Your press release should end with a short paragraph (boilerplate) that describes your event, its owner, title-sponsor and possibly a short history. If you are filing a joint press release, include a boilerplate for both organizations. Include the USA Cycling Mountain Bike National Calendar boilerplate.