

Announcement News Release Tips

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These are some of the most common errors/issues present in student writing of announcement news releases.

- **The subject and pronoun must be parallel (subject/pronoun agreement).**
 - NO: The company announced their quarterly earnings.
 - YES: The company announced its quarterly earnings.
 - YES: Company officials announced their quarterly earnings. (Making *officials* – a plural – the subject.)
- **Don't make the time element the most prominent part of the sentence.**
 - NO: This morning, Melody Gregg retired as chairman.
 - YES: Melody Gregg retired as chairman this morning.
- **Avoid passive voice. Make the subject the doer of the action.**
 - NO: Rockford was named by *Business Week*...
 - YES: *Business Week* named Rockford...
- **Break up multi-sentence quotes by placing attribution at the end of the first sentence.**
 - NO: "He's a good guy. I like him a lot," said Jones.
 - YES: "He's a good guy," said Jones. "I like him a lot."
- **Use only *said* for attribution in news releases.**
 - NO: According to Smith, Jones starts his job on Monday.
 - YES: Smith said Jones starts his job on Monday.
- **Avoid the unnecessary use of the helping *to be* verb.**
 - NO: Jones is starting his job Monday.
 - NO: Jones will be starting his job Monday.
 - YES: Jones starts his job Monday. (*NOTE: This is also present tense: It is a fact in the present that Jones starts his job on Monday.*)
- **Avoid giving human qualities to inanimate objects.**
 - NO: MediaMedia announced that...
 - YES: MegaMedia Chairman Melody Gregg announced that...
- **United States is a noun in first reference. U.S. is an adjective, even in titles.**
 - NO: The U.S. leads all countries in the number of rock stars.
 - YES: The United States leads all countries..." (*NOTE: U.S. OK in second and subsequent references and in direct quotes.*)
 - NO: The United States Commerce Department
 - YES: The U.S. Commerce Department
- **Use present-perfect tense in ledes – and just in the ledes – to convey the recent past (the reason it is news).**
 - NO: Chairman Phil Jones announced...
 - YES: Chairman Phil Jones has announced...

- **We are not mind readers – give proper attribution.**
 - NO: Jones wants to spend more time with his children.
 - YES: Jones said he wants to spend more time with his children.
- **Write tight. Use the fewest words possible.**
 - NO: the magazine publishing division of MegaMedia.
 - YES: MegaMedia's (or *the company's* in second and subsequent references) magazine division.

Some other basic rules to remember:

- **Remember the purpose behind the announcement.** It may not be something you explicitly state. But it is the impression you want to convey to the reader. When companies announce a change in leadership, there is often an underlying message that they are stable and that the change is a normal business transaction. They convey that stability through disclosures of facts and quotes that reassure the reader. They may not explicitly say “we are stable.” But not conveying that message may leave some readers with the impression that the company or organization is in trouble.
- **Place all of the crucial information in the first two paragraphs.** By the time you reach the quote graf (the third paragraph), all of the basic “5W” questions (who, what, where, when, why and how) should have been answered. The nut graf – called that because it holds the story together – is where you answer the “5W” questions not addressed in the lede.
- **Place basic company/organization information at the end of the story.** The basic facts are rarely the most important elements of the story. However, you should make it a habit of including this information at the end of the story for journalists who may not be familiar with the company or organization.
- **Give proper attribution.** When we say someone has retired to spend time with his or her grandchildren, how do we know that? We know that in all likelihood before the person *said* that. It gives your copy more credibility when you specifically cite the source of information.
- **Write tight and bright.** Use an economy of language. Use the most appropriate verbs – active verbs that convey the meaning you wish to leave with the reader. Use the subject-verb-object sentence structure.
- **Don't be too familiar.** Use a person's full name in first reference. Use only the family (last) name in second and subsequent references. The exceptions are when using the full name avoids confusion (such as George W. Bush and George H. W. Bush) or when used in direct quotes. Never use the just the person's first name in second reference – it is considered disrespectful.