



## HELPFUL HINTS FOR WRITING A PRESS RELEASE, LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR AN OP-ED

When you want to publicize an event or activity, you can send a press release to our local newspapers or regional news outlets. These may include newspapers and radio stations but also online calendars that allow you to post without outside editing, except for length restrictions.

For newspapers, press releases are short pieces that follow journalistic rules for news; thus they should include the “5 Ws,” meaning details as to Who, What, When, Where, and Why. Needless to say, press releases should publicize a newsworthy event.

When you're submitting a press release, it's important to know who the paper serves and the name of the relevant editor. Releases should be emailed to the proper editor, greeting him or her by name, as well as to reporters you know to be attentive to or responsible for covering an area relating to your news. Your cover note should include time parameters for when you want the release to run. Knowing the publication dates and copy deadlines is critical. In your cover note, you may also provide links for more information or to photos and videos to help sell your news story to the editor. Don't feel compelled to send the identical release if you can modify it for a particular paper or papers. Bear in mind the outlet where your release is being read is understaffed and gets a ton of pitches for coverage. Your email subject line is critical. Be catchy but factual in as concise a manner as possible.

Depending on the urgency, put in a follow-up phone call if you don't have acknowledgment of receipt within a few days or a week. Best times to call are late mornings or early afternoons, after editors have faced the Inbox and before deadlines.

Now let's get started!

First, provide **Media Contact Details**. An effective press release should contain your contact information: your name, phone number, and email address.

Second, provide a **Compelling Headline**. This should be well articulated and eye catching to make the person want to read on. A good headline is specific, direct, and easy to understand, and uses the active voice.

Third, type your **Dateline**, which generally includes the name of the town and the date, in all capital letters followed by a dash. If you want to emphasize a regional draw, you may use a region instead of the name of a town. Example for a specific town: NEW BRAINTREE, July2 –

Then begin the first sentence of the **Body**. The first paragraph is the most important paragraph because it contains a summary of the press release. Be both factual and succinct, and as complete as possible. Fit all the most important information in the first paragraph, then follow with secondary essentials in the next paragraph. Continue with the remaining information in order of importance. Newspapers cutting from the bottom for space reasons may be lazy, but this practice is common.

Your two or three paragraphs should explain every detail of the information you want to share. Note that newspaper paragraphs are short – three sentences at the most. Be sure to include

- Who is involved
- What exactly is happening
- When it's happening
- Where it's happening
- Why it matters

Be sure to answer the question busy people ask themselves early in reading: “So what?” Make it more interesting by using statistics or strong and memorable quotes from someone in the organization or from others who are valued voices. Look for local people to mention or quote – identify them by name and hometown within the paper’s circulation area.

Now write the **Boilerplate**, a short paragraph in which you provide information about the organization: who you are, when you were founded, what is your vision, and so on. It is not the most important information in event publicity, so include it only if you have space.

Finally, end with a **Call To Action**. This is the final element of an effective press release. Give the reader a clear call to action to let folks know what you want them to do: RSVP, call, email, show up, and so on. Keep it short and sweet.

At the bottom, type the traditional **three hashtags (###)** to signal that the press release is finished. Center these on their own line.

Remember to use proper grammar, spelling, titles, and style. Proof it carefully!

**\*\* Thank you to Michelle Moore of SharpSpring, Ariel Hyatt of CyberPR, Team NewsVair \*\***

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR AN OP-ED**

### **What's the difference between a Letter to the Editor and an Op-Ed?**

- LTE = short (250 words), is a response to a specific article or event
- Op-Ed = longer (750 words), not necessarily a response to specific event

### **Which is preferable for you to write?**

Op-Ed is better; it's longer and can be more detailed and nuanced; it helps you reach a wider audience; it demonstrates that there's public concern about an issue; it puts a personal face to the issue; and it gets attention from legislators. Op-Eds can be more stylistic, with a personal voice.

### **What makes an Op-Ed effective?**

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| --Be as broadly inclusive as you can | --Focus on constituents, issues, lived experiences |
| --Provide facts and figures          | --Don't linger on your opponents' arguments        |
| --Know your audience                 | --End with a call to action                        |

### **What are some ways you can start?**

- Connect to a current event or another piece of media (this is your lead, your hook).
- Rework a piece of conventional wisdom.      --Ask a question, then answer it with your thesis.

## How do I go about getting published?

Try an LTE first (because you don't have to pitch an LTE). For an Op-Ed, a successful pitch (cover letter email) is 1) timely, 2) well-written, 3) brief and clear in your one or two sentences summarizing your piece, 4) conveys expertise and establishes your credentials, and 5) communicates an unexpected point of view. It should answer these questions: Why now? Why should people care? Why should it be me writing about it? Include your piece with your cover letter email or as an attachment. Ask the editor to respond within a time frame. Then, if you don't hear from the editor, follow-up! (ask if you're pitching to the right person)

**\*\* Thank you to Act on Mass for providing training material for this section. \*\***

## PUBLICATIONS

### Print Dailies

**Worcester Telegram & Gazette** (Gannett Newspapers) Serving *Worcester County*.

- **Submit a news item by form:** complete the form at <https://www.telegram.com/section?template=submit&subtype=news> However, you can put a headline atop the news item and all the other info you had on paper. If you bump up against a character limit, sacrifice your ego and cut your piece. The goal is to get published.
- **Submit a news item, letter, or op-ed to the proper contacts** listed at <https://www.telegram.com/contact> News editors handle local news but “people-y” events go to Features, and events also can go to Worcester Magazine, which the T&G owns now.
- **Find the “Letters” policies** at <https://www.telegram.com/story/opinion/2020/11/18/how-submit-letter-editor/3773910001/>

**Springfield Republican/MassLive.com** (Advance Publications/Newhouse News) MassLive has expanded to have a news bureau in Worcester and regularly reports on events in the city, though less frequently in the outlying areas. The Republican publishes in *Hampden County and the Pioneer Valley*, reaching into the *Brookfields and the Hardwick area* on occasion.

- Print and online contacts for news are at <https://www.masslive.com/news/page/newsroom.html>. There is an online submission address for MassLive.
- For the Events Calendar event submission form, go to [masslive.com/myevent](https://masslive.com/myevent) You will be prompted to create a free account.
- Letters to the Editor, local Op-Ed columns and some syndicated columns are shared online at <https://www.masslive.com/opinion/>.
- Readers may submit a letter to the editor to: Letters to the Editor, The Republican, 1860 Main St. Springfield, MA. 01101, or to [letters@repub.com](mailto:letters@repub.com). Your full name, address and telephone number must be included. Addresses and phone numbers will not be printed or appear online. Letters to the Editor in the Republican will appear in Thursday and Sunday editions, but may appear on MassLive at any time.
- Letters should be concise, no more than 250 words. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.
- They welcome op-eds from the community on topics that are relevant to their region. Op-eds should be no longer than 750 words and may appear in both the Republican or MassLive. Particular attention will be given to local topics that are well-written and concise

## **Print Non-Dailies** (English language weeklies in our area are published by either Stonebridge Press or Turley Newspapers)

**Stonebridge Press** – *Auburn News, Charlton Villager, Webster Times, Sturbridge Villager, Southbridge News, Spencer New Leader, and Villager titles in Northeast Connecticut*

To send press releases for all publications, calendar items, and information to Stonebridge Press publications, email directly to the editor at [news@stonebridgepress.news](mailto:news@stonebridgepress.news). Include contact information in case there are questions. Last known editor: Brendan Berube, 508-909-4106.

**Deadline for submission:** Monday at 4 p.m. for the current week's edition. Publication date is Friday.

**Turley Newspapers** – Publications cover a wide area from *Springfield suburbs to Barre and the Brookfields*. Towns include *Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston, Monson, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Oakham, Palmer, Ware*.

Editorial contact should be made separately to the editor at each paper you want to reach. Click on the image of each paper to find the current editorial contact, at <http://newspapers.turley.com/> Each paper has its own page with a “Contacts” tab. If you develop a list, be sure it’s current. Some editors cover multiple papers. Follow up with any of them by phone at (413) 283-8393. They claim to respond to all e-mails but it isn’t always so.

**Deadline for submission:** Monday at noon for the current week's edition.

**Vocero Hispano Newspaper** – Based in Southbridge, this newspaper is published weekly on Fridays and is distributed to over 450 locations in Massachusetts. Email press releases to [news@VoceroHispano.com](mailto:news@VoceroHispano.com). Letters to the Editor should be emailed to [editor@vocerohispano.com](mailto:editor@vocerohispano.com)

## **Non-Print Media**

**WFCR / New England Public Media** has a web form you can use to enter information about your event: <https://www.nepm.org/community-calendar/events/create>

**Spectrum TV Channel 1 Worcester** also has a web form you can use to enter information about your event: <https://spectrumnews1.com/ma/worcester/submit-event>

Note that Spectrum News 1 provides news across the state, from Beacon Hill to the Berkshires, and including our Massachusetts congressional delegation on Capitol Hill. Spectrum News 1 is available exclusively to Spectrum subscribers across Massachusetts on channel 1 and is owned and operated by Charter Communications.

Many towns in our area have **public access channels**. Look for your town here and click on the link: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-community-access-television-websites>

**Radio Worcester Network/Talk of the Commonwealth** is a “relentlessly local” talk show format which offers Central Mass perspectives on state and national stories, with shows airing on WCRN 830 AM (Westborough) weekdays from 6-10 am and WPKZ 105.3 FM/1280 AM (Fitchburg) Tuesday-Thursday, 1-3 pm (and online). Website is <https://radioworcester.net/>

Hank Stolz - email [hank@radioworcester.com](mailto:hank@radioworcester.com)  
774-364-8255

<https://www.facebook.com/talkofthecommonwealth>

**Unity Radio Worcester / WUTY 97.9 FM.** Unity Radio is designed to raise the awareness of community needs and act as a media resource within the neighborhoods we live in, by encouraging public dialogue and promoting equal access to community resources. Website is <https://www.wuty979fm.org/>  
Ernie Floyd - email [efloyd@pridepro.org](mailto:efloyd@pridepro.org)

These local radio stations serve the Worcester area and may be willing to publicize your event:  
104.5 WXLO - General Information: 508-752-1045 - <https://www.wxlo.com/>  
96.1 WSRS - Studio Line: 508-792-9777 - <https://961srs.iheart.com/>  
100.1 WWFX - General Information: 508-752-1045 - <https://www.pikefm.com/>  
580/94.9 WTAG - Newsroom Line: 508-755-0058 - <https://wtag.iheart.com/>  
91.3 WCUW FM - Office: 508-753-1012 - Studio: 508-753-2284 - email [info@wcuw.org](mailto:info@wcuw.org)

**WGBH News Worcester Bureau.** Boston's public radio and TV station does broadcast in our area.  
<https://www.wgbh.org/news>  
Carrie Saldo, Reporter - [carriesaldo@gmail.com](mailto:carriesaldo@gmail.com) or <https://twitter.com/carriesaldo>

**Citizen Chronicle** is local digital news for Southern Worcester County  
email [editor@thecitizenchronicle.com](mailto:editor@thecitizenchronicle.com)  
<http://www.thecitizenchronicle.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/TheCitizenChronicle/>  
<https://twitter.com/TheCitizenChron>  
<http://instagram.com/thecitizenchronicle/>

**Central Mass Town Square** is a new subscription-based local website that focuses exclusively on delivering content about what's good in a community.  
<https://centralmasstownsquare.com>  
email [submit@centralmasstownsquare.com](mailto:submit@centralmasstownsquare.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/centralmasstownsquare>  
<https://twitter.com/cmatownsquare>

**This Week in Worcester** is an independent and local online news site dedicated to reporting the news and happenings in the city  
<https://thisweekinworcester.com>  
email [thisweekinworcester@gmail.com](mailto:thisweekinworcester@gmail.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/thisweekinworcester>  
<https://twitter.com/thisweekinwoo>  
<https://instagram.com/thisweekinworcester>

**DemDispatch** is a weekly email put out through MassDems for local town committees and left-leaning organizations in Massachusetts. Fill out the form here: <https://massdems.org/takeaction/events/> or email [events@massdems.org](mailto:events@massdems.org).

## Facebook

Did you get a letter or op-ed published? Have an event to promote? Take some great photos or want to report on a meeting? Contact Danielle Kane at [dmlkane@charter.net](mailto:dmlkane@charter.net) and she will post it on our Grassroots Central Mass Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/grassrootscentralmass>

Other groups and pages to consider sharing with:

**Brookfields Fight Fear**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1189916931386817>

**Rural Justice Network:**

<https://instagram.com/ruraljusticenetwork>

<https://www.ruraljusticenetwork.com/>

email [ruraljusticenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:ruraljusticenetwork@gmail.com)

**Community Groups on Facebook**

You usually have to join as a member of a Facebook group in order to post there; but most times you don't have to live in the town to join its group. Please follow the rules of each group. Most don't allow discussion of politics but will allow posting about community events or opportunities. Use your judgment on whether your post would be welcome and/or appropriate for the group.

Here are some of the groups in our area:

Barre MA Residents Forum

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BarreMassResidentsForum>

Brimfield MA Community

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/250102992048440>

Brookfield MA Community

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1246133855445723>

East Brookfield MA Community Forum

<https://www.facebook.com/East-Brookfield-MA-Community-Forum-266344207580064>

North Brookfield MA News (page, not a group, but you can post as a visitor for the admin to share)

<https://www.facebook.com/NBrookfieldNews>

Focused on Southbridge MA

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FocusedOnSouthbridge>

The Spencer Bulletin MA Board

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/226208917528768>

Sturbridge MA Community

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/702364519906557>

Wales MA Community

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1909716055939566>

Warren MA Neighborhood Watch

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/374776236339580>

West Brookfield MA

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/260865001966>