



As you work to promote programs and events at your library, here is a brief list of information you should have ready before you talk to the media or begin writing press releases and other informational pieces.

- **Remember the basic “5 Ws” (who, what, when, where, and why), and also plan for the how if appropriate.** It’s amazing how many times press releases are written that don’t include this basic information. Newspapers and other media should never be required to call the library to ask the time an event starts, the room being used, must you register ahead of time, who is the performer/teacher/lecturer, who should attend this particular event, or why it should be of interest to the newspaper’s readers.
- **Always include a contact person.** Newspapers will sometimes see more of an article in your press release than you do, so make sure you provide a name, phone number, and e-mail address. This person must be able to answer questions for the media. Nothing kills a story faster than calling the contact person and learning that they can’t answer your questions. You also need to make it clear that this contact person should return calls promptly. Newspapers work on deadlines that are very firm. If you fail to call them back, you may miss a very good opportunity.
- **Have local resources available to provide quotes.** Newspapers are always looking for the local angle, and they like to quote local residents that their readers know. If you’re announcing an event or class, have a past participant who can talk about the value of this sort of programming. This is also an ideal opportunity to have others help tell your important story.
- **Remember that less is more.** Be selective and don’t overwhelm the newspaper with press releases. Newspaper space is valuable, and if you request free space too often you will start to get turned down. Hopefully your newspaper has a calendar or notice section that you can use regularly, but you should save press releases for more important items. If the newspaper knows this, you’ll get more notice.
- **Work ahead and plan with the newspaper.** You should take the time to plan your programs for the year as thoroughly as possible and do it in conjunction with the newspaper. If you know you’re going to need newspaper coverage to promote an event, you don’t want to schedule it so that need falls the same week the newspaper is doing it’s annual bridal or garden section. They’ll appreciate the advanced planning and will be more willing to work with you.
- **Try to avoid busy times.** You can’t always know when the newspaper will be busiest, but you can bet that budget times for the school district, city/village/town, or county will be busy times. So is back to school, end of school year, and certain holidays. Make sure you know your newspaper’s deadlines and production schedule so you can avoid making requests at the wrong times.
- **Target feature articles.** There are significant down times for newspapers—like the week between Christmas and New Years—that are perfect opportunities for feature articles about the library (non-timely pieces). This and others may be good times to plan feature stories. The newspaper will be thankful for the copy, and they can work ahead and have articles ready. Planning ahead with the newspaper will let you identify these times so you can prepare accordingly.
 - *Take the opportunity to have the subject of the feature tell your library’s story. It may be to talk about the extraordinary value the library provides, it may be the depth of the library’s holdings, or it may be the special programming that is offered. It’s what you decide, but prep people to tie this issue to the interview.*
- **Review Newspaper Archives.** It’s important to take time each year to review what your local newspaper has covered in regard to the library, how that coverage compared to the press releases you sent, and what sorts of articles and photos the newspaper used. This should help you refine what events you choose to promote, and how you promote the events.