3 Principles

- Target your audience
- Develop a communications plan
- Layer the information

Common Report Errors

- Short Executive Summary
- No jargon
- Use report headers
- Key data only
- Don't wait for perfect data
- Limit narrative
- Consider formatting and design

Alternatives to the Final Report

- Slides
- Presentations
- Infographics
- Mapping
- 1-2 Pagers
- Others

Selected Tools

- What will YOU use?

Editorial: Unlearning Some of our Social Scientist Habits

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According to the organizational learning literature, some of the most important learning an organization can do is in the form of organizational *unlearning*—getting rid of erroneous or dysfunctional knowledge, habits, and practices. Simply adding new skills, behaviors, and ways of thinking isn't enough. Without some explicit attention to the process of unlearning, existing knowledge and know-how becomes a barrier to constructive change and new learning.

The same is true in evaluation. Many of us had our primary training in the social sciences, which imbued us with a set of knowledge, skills, practices, and habits that are considered good practice in those disciplines. When we moved into evaluation, we became aware that there was something more that we needed to know (apart from social science research skills), and many of us set about adding to our repertoire so we could practice good evaluation. But how well have we paid attention to *unlearning* some of the baggage we brought with us from the social sciences?

Four social scientist habits that I often see as barriers to good evaluation are:

1. Including models or theories but not using them evaluatively
2. Leaping to measurement too quickly
3. Reporting results separately by data type or source
4. Ordering evaluation report sections like a Master's thesis

1. Including Models or Theories but not Using Them Evaluatively

Our social science training teaches us that there's nothing as useful as a good theory. Therefore, a common feature of evaluation reports is some sort of literature review and often the presentation of a theoretical model that illustrates how some of the variables fit together.

While I am all for having a conceptual framework to help explain a piece of work—and I often use them myself—in my experience, many of these theoretical models (especially if they are neither representations of program theory nor of the wider system in which the program is embedded) are often only tangentially related to the evaluation questions; that is, what the client really needs to know. As such, these theoretical models have a tendency to gravitate evaluation effort away from the 'core' task of answering important evaluative questions and into the territory of "wouldn't it be nice to know" research questions (e.g., about relationships among variables).

In my experience, the worst examples of low utility models and theories tend to turn up in cases where a university faculty member has been co-opted onto the evaluation team for their *content* (but not evaluation!) expertise. It is often clearly evident that the primary purpose of including the model is to allow said faculty member to measure several variables in the model and publish a paper on the results, rather than to enhance the validity, utility, or comprehensibility of the evaluation.

So, what would constitute good use of models and theories in evaluation? The most useful examples I have seen are representations of program theory (whether linear or more systems-oriented) that (a) succinctly clarify what the evaluand is and how it is expected to generate outcomes of value and (b) are linked directly with important evaluative questions; that is, questions about the quality or value of the evaluand and/or its effects.

Too often, logic models and other theories are presented in an evaluation but left dangling in the introduction section and not used later on. Or, they can be used inappropriately, for example, when too much effort is spent evaluating the theory at the expense of the main task—evaluating the program. If the model is unrelated to the main evaluation questions, it can actually get in the way of a concise and useful explanation by sending the reader off on theoretical tangents.

2. Leaping to Measurement too Quickly

Perhaps this has to do with the literature review → methods transition in traditional applied research, but I have been staggered at how often I see evaluations leap directly to measures without even the slightest attention to evaluation questions. It's almost as if the instructions have been simply "Evaluate this" and the first step has been identifying indicators or variables of interest and figuring out how to measure them. Or, in the case of qualitative research, identifying key informants and writing up lists of things to ask them.

The problems with the "leap to measurement" approach quickly become apparent when we reach data collection and analysis. The write-up consists of either screeds of means and standard deviations, perhaps some correlation matrices, and/or oceans of stories or quotes. But the interpretation step from here to "So what? What does this tell us about the value of the program?" is completely missing. Perhaps the writers feel that the program's merit should be intuitively obvious, or that everyone should be allowed to make their own interpretation. But for the client seeking to make evidence-informed decisions using the findings, it's not clear what questions the measures were designed to answer in the first place, let alone what answers they might provide.

Evaluations cannot produce useful answers unless they actually ask useful questions in the first place!

Sometimes we see a list of [descriptive and/or causal] research questions rather than truly evaluative questions. These are often asked at the variable level (e.g., "What is the effect of Program X on Variable Y?"), in contrast with evaluative questions about the program (or other evaluand) itself (e.g., "To what extent does Program X produce outcomes of sufficient value to justify its cost?"). Questions about the nature or relationships among variables are what publishable research is all about. Questions about the quality of the program, the value of the outcomes, its comparative cost-effectiveness, key learnings, and the areas for improvement are what evaluation is all about.

So, a crucial but often-skipped step on the way to measurement (or, more correctly, qualitative and quantitative data gathering) is the formulation of a set of evaluation questions to guide the project. These should be developed in (or at least after) consultation with the primary intended users of the evaluation. Each question should be something that an actual decision maker needs an answer to. And each question should be evaluative (not merely descriptive) in nature—these are the questions that are most useful and relevant for decision making.

It is true that good research training will teach people how to write clear research questions before leaping to measurement; the key 'unlearning' task here is letting go of the tendency to write questions about variables and the relationships among them. What an evaluation needs are questions about the quality of the program, the value of its outcomes, its comparative cost-effectiveness, its sustainability, and so forth.

3. Reporting Results Separately by Data Type or Source

In the applied social sciences, as in evaluation, we are all taught the importance of 'triangulation'—using data of different types and from different sources. But what we are not usually taught is how to weave the findings together to create a cohesive answer to a real question. Time and again I see results reported separately by data type and source, e.g., in sections entitled *Qualitative Findings* and *Quantitative Findings* (separating types of data) or *Responses from the recipient survey* and *Responses from the instructor survey* (separating sources of data), with no attempt to link them together.

The whole point of triangulation is to get different perspectives on the answer to the same question. It follows that, in order for triangulation to serve its purpose, different types and sources of data *must* be woven together in the analysis. The end result should be a cohesive answer to an evaluation question.

It strikes me that it is not so much a matter of unlearning what we were taught about triangulation in social science research classes, but acquiring a skill that we should have been taught in order to do good descriptive research as well. The evaluative aspect (asking explicitly about quality or value) will be different, of course, but making effective use of triangulated data should be a fundamental skill taught in even the most basic of research courses.

4. Ordering Evaluation Report Sections Like a Master's Thesis

It has always seemed somewhat bizarre to me that the majority of Master's (or Honours[1]) students in the social sciences plan to graduate and find work in an applied setting, yet graduate training at the Master's level seems so strongly geared to preparing people for a doctorate or a career in academic-style research. A lot of effort goes into teaching people how to write scientifically using sophisticated-sounding language, conforming strictly to the almighty American Psychological Association Publication Manual, and generating publishable papers. But how often are Master's students taught to write a report that gets straight to the point and will make sense to managers with no social science training?

This was the piece of social science research unlearning that came to bite me swiftly and mercilessly when I first moved into an applied setting to use my new-found skills in applied psychology. My reports were written and structured in a way that would have delighted my professor but did nothing but irritate management and minimize the likelihood that they would read, let alone use, my findings.

In our social science training we are taught to lead the reader carefully through the theoretical and empirical backdrop for our study, the research questions, the methodology, the results (be careful to be very neutral and not draw conclusions at this stage!), then the discussion section where we may draw tentative conclusions about what the data "appear to suggest" (but never actually say directly that something is the case, even if we are certain to a level of $p < .001$!).

I occasionally work with consultants who were similarly trained in the applied social sciences and I frequently find that the draft 'evaluation' reports they send me are plagued with the structure of a Master's thesis, which makes it incredibly difficult for me (let alone the client) to decipher results. It typically goes something like this: Executive Summary (lots of

[1] Honours is, roughly, a one-year post-graduate degree offered in countries using the British system.

introductory information, methodology, sampling, random snippets of findings that fail to give a clear sense of the program's quality or value, plus something incomprehensible about moderator variables), Introduction, Literature Review, a theoretical model and detailed explanation of the relevant social science theory explaining the links along some variables (unfortunately not a program logic model, and not even remotely linked to an evaluation question—this part contributed by a university faculty member with no evaluation expertise), Methodology, Findings (about 20 pages of raw data, all presented separately by source and data type with virtually no explanatory narrative, none of it linked back to the questions), Conclusions (some glimmers of hope in here, but by now we are 37 pages into the report and have lost most of our audience), Appendices.

For the client, reading a report like this feels like wading through mud. Page after page of graphs and interview quotes, but not a hint of whether or how they were used to answer any question of value. When, oh when, are they going to get to the point?

How can we get our evaluation reports to make more sense to clients?

One strategy I use is to structure the *Findings* part of the evaluation report into 7 +/- 2 sections, one for each of the 'big picture' evaluation questions used to frame the evaluation. In each section, all data pertaining to that question (qualitative, quantitative, interviews, surveys, observations, document analyses, from different people and perspectives) are presented, interpreted as they are presented, and woven together to form a direct answer to the question. Next, I write a 2-page executive summary using the same structure: 7 +/- 2 questions with straight-to-the-point and explicitly evaluative answers of 1-2 paragraphs each.

If the client has seven or so major questions about the program that need to be answered, then the first two pages he or she reads (perhaps the only two pages!) should contain direct answers to those questions. And if the client wants to know on what basis those conclusions were drawn, it should be a simple matter to turn to the relevant section of the report and see clearly how 'quality' and 'value' were defined for that particular question, what data were used to answer it, and how they were interpreted together, relative to those definitions of quality/value.

Obviously there are many different reporting structures that will meet the needs of clients; I am simply suggesting one that works well for me in some evaluation reports. The main point here is that the traditional APA format research paper, with its structure that forces clients to suffer through all the theory and methodology before they get anything resembling an answer to what they want to know, tends to be one of the least useful formats possible.

Training in the applied social sciences provides a wonderful starting toolkit for a career in evaluation, albeit one that needs topping up with several essentials. But effective topping up is best done after we identify a few social scientist habits that get in the way of good evaluation and do some work to weed them out (or, put them aside for more traditional research projects). With a little unlearning and the boldness to try something radically different and fundamentally client-oriented, our evaluation work could get really interesting—and useful, and credible, and more valid.

Tip Sheet 2

Sending Clear and Consistent Message

Developing clear message points and using them frequently and consistently is a key to a successful external communications strategy. Message points should be repeated often. They make effective sound bites, headlines and news leads. They are quick answers to give if a community leader asks how the group is doing.

Messages that are repeated consistently frequently are messages that are remembered.

The following message points might be used to communicate about your communitygroup.

- Our group accomplished more than we could have done by working individually
- When we collaborate, we profit from each other's strengths. This makes our programs more effective and useful.
- When we collaborate, we avoid duplication of effort. This makes our programs more efficient.
- Families and communities reap the greatest benefits when we work together toward a common goal.
- Working as a community group builds community among the partners. It also builds individual and group skills, knowledge and leadership.

You may want to develop other message points that fit your own community group and its projects. For example, if your group is working with many volunteers, "Volunteers can make the difference" might be a key message. As you think about your message points, consider these questions.

- What do you want people to remember about the community group?
- What findings from the survey make a message point that will increase the visibility and credibility of your work?
- Don't confuse frequent repetition of message points with being redundant. Repetition makes sure your message gets heard and remembered.

AEA Data Visualization and Reporting TIG

Tips for Creating Better Slides 2011

1. Present one idea per slide.
2. Ditch ornate slide designs and templates and use high contrast backgrounds.
3. People remember images better than text. However, use images only when the theme or picture supports your point as a visual metaphor. Avoid pictures that merely decorate.
4. When including images, an optimum photo resolution is 640 x 480 pixels.
5. Expand images so they use up all the available space on the slide. Then add text in a contrasting color in an appropriate space overtop.
6. Graphic pictures that have emotional impact will sometimes prevent previous and future points from sinking in. Take a breath and let the images settle with the audience.
7. Use a maximum of 6 **words** per slide (not six points as some believe). If you can PDF your slides and they would suffice as your handout, you have too much text on your slides. Opt for a minimum font size of 40 pt wherever possible.
8. If you imagine a slide being divided into four quadrants, note that people remember what is in the top left quadrant best.
9. Use animation sparingly and purposefully to illustrate or emphasize a point. The goal of animation should be to *control the focus*.
10. When presenting data such as graphs, highlight (or animate) the most important information you want your audience to remember with one color and make everything else shades of grey. Use that same color to highlight important information throughout your slides.

Tips for Presenting Slides Better

1. Inform the audience that you will pass out (or email) your handouts after the talk. Then people focus on, and listen better, to you.
2. Be aware of principles of *pacing.* Move quickly through simple facts and concepts for better impact and retention. Slow down for complex material.
3. Be aware of *congruence.* Don't talk about one thing while referencing another.
4. Unless people are unable to read your slides, don't read them out loud except in rare cases for deliberate emphasis, especially when you use cartoons or comics.
5. Practice, practice, practice! This will help with your timing and keep you within your allotted time – the true sign of a professional presenter.

Punchy title

Insert your logo here, if your organization has one!

Short subtitle: your program in a sentence.

"Your program in a nutshell"
Think of this section as an executive summary: if the reader ONLY read this section of the brief, they should understand the problem your program addresses and how or why your program can help. At the same time, this section should entice the reader to read on.

Photo or image
With this box selected, go to *Insert>Picture>From File…*

Photo caption

- Make a few bullet points of memorable or unique aspects of your program
- These could be positive impacts or results, quotes, underlying philosophies, etc.
- Make these concrete and vivid: something the reader can picture in their mind!

Photo or image
With this box selected, go to *Insert>Picture>From File…*

If you don't want to include another photo, expand the above text box and include more highlights.

Photo caption

Use this section to provide a **problem statement**. What issue is your program addressing and trying to fix or improve?
You can describe problem in terms of a social problem, health problem, or describe the economic impact of the problem.
Use evidence, statistics, stories, or testimonials. Cite sources whenever possible; make this brief a source of *reliable information* about the problem your program seeks to address.

Now, craft a **transition** from the problem to the solution that you propose. *"But there's good news: we can help at-risk kids so they can avoid this problem."*

Go on to "**brag**" about your program! Be persuasive and direct. Imagine your reader is a real skeptic, and it is your job to convince them! Include things such as:
•Evidence for effectiveness. *Use any evaluation data you are collecting here. Use charts or graphs if possible.*
• The rationale behind your program: why have you chosen the approach you have?
• Make a *direct link* between your program activities and how it will address the problem. It should be crystal clear why your program is a good solution.

What is the "call to action" for the reader?
What do you want the reader to do after seeing this brief? What could help your program succeed even more? Does it need funding? Volunteers? Is there a policy or law that would help your program? If so, what can the reader do to support that policy?

Summarize this "call to action" here. Ideally, it will be a *behavior*- something the reader should *DO*, not just *think* or *believe*.
Note this text box is in two columns. It automatically jumps from box 1 to box 2 as you type!

Sources

Contact

OXFAM Table Top Summary Template

Date

The Focus of this MEL Report

[Things like: period covered, activities undertaken, objective of the effort, relevance to wider campaign, why we took the time to MEL it.]

MEL Approach

[Things like: assessing project against objectives or having specific learning agenda, techniques used (surveys, interviews, analysis of routine tracking data from CP, media hits, etc., special tracking forms developed for the purpose. Summary of team-based reviews by X, Y and Z teams]

"Big Surprises" or "What you Should Know (if you don't remember anything else)" – something like that

[Three headline take-aways from the review. Can be main "wow" findings or most important "lessons learned" (aka what we need to do differently)]

1. Boom
2. Boom
3. Boom

Source: Oxfam Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning.

Key Findings

[Here you get to go into a wee bit more detail. A couple ideas on approaches:

- *Bring in some data, maybe a table or chart or two.*
- *Have a "by the numbers" section on activity output.*
- *Organize by key findings area. Use "Headline" approach, so the header actually summarizes the finding. Draws reader in. They "get it" at a glance*
- *Organize the findings using a time line*
- *Treat the findings like a "menu" with costs or quant results data attached to the qualitative finding*
- *Be sure to include balanced assessments – things that went great, things that were a disappointment.*
- *This is NOT a PR product. It's an executive summary – with zing! Be creative!]*

Take-Aways or Lessons Learned

[What are the top 2 – 3 things that the team or Management, or whoever, needs to do differently, or is determined to do differently, or more of, or less of, as a result of this review? What lessons should other teams take away from this team's experience? Three years from now, if we come back and read these, will we be able to judge our success at having learned the lesson? Make sure they're SMART - be sufficiently clear so the take-aways are specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, time-bound.]

Brought to you by…

- Author /authors
- Content contributors
- Key reviewer/owner of the effort itself

Resources for Poster Presenters

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Nicol, A.A.M., P. M. Pexman. 2003. Displaying your findings: a practical guide for creating figures, posters, and presentations. American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

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Tufte, E. 1983. The Visual Display of Quantitative Information. Graphics Press, Cheshire, CT.

Tufte, E. 1997. Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative. Graphics Press, Cheshire, CT.

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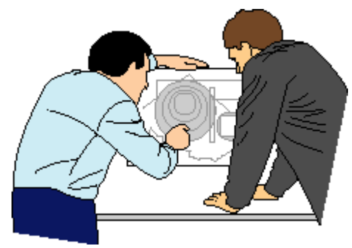
Effective Scientific Posters

Quick Reference

George R. Hess

A poster is a *visual* communication tool.

An effective poster will help you …



… engage colleagues in conversation.

… get your main points across to as many people as possible.

Posters serve as …
» a source of information
» a conversation starter
» a summary of your work
» an advertisement of your work

Tips for Effective Poster Presentations

Get your message across with effective ***visual displays of data*** and small blocks of supporting text. Think of your poster as an illustrated abstract.

Tell readers why your work matters, what you did, what you found, and what you recommend. Avoid excessive focus on methods – it's the results and implications that count!

Overall appearance. Use a pleasing arrangement of graphics, text, colors. Your poster should be neat and uncluttered – use white space to help organize sections. Balance the placement of text and figures.

Organization. Use headings to help readers find what they're looking for: objective, results, conclusions, etc. A columnar format helps traffic flow in a crowded poster session.

Minimize text – use graphics. Keep text in blocks of no more than 50-75 words – don't create large, monolithic paragraphs of prose.

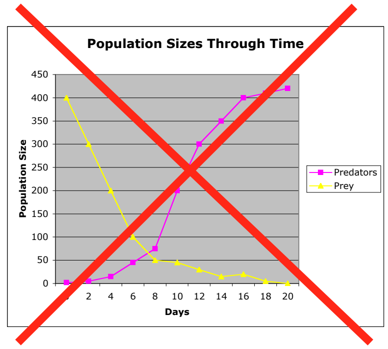
Text size. All text should be large enough to read from 1-2 meters, including the text in figures. Title should be larger, to attract attention from far away.

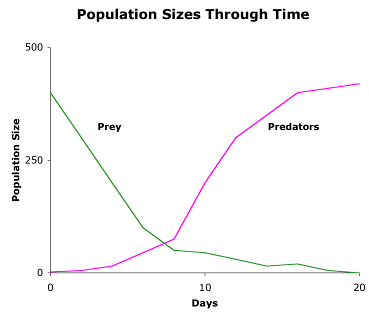
Use color cautiously. Dark letters on light background are easiest to read. Stick to a theme of 2-3 colors. Avoid overly bright colors – they attract attention but wear out reader's eyes.

Don't fight reader gravity, which pulls the eyes from top to bottom (first), and left to right.

Include full contact information. You want to be found – the reader should not have to look up anything to find you.

Clean graphs show data clearly!





Desired message: Prey decreased as predators increased.

Focus on relationships – exact values are usually not important.

Eliminate "chart junk" to keep focus on data (Tufte 1983). Grid lines, detailed ticks on axes, data markers, and grey background are not needed.

Label data directly, when possible. Legends force reader to look back and forth to decode graph.

Message is now loud and clear!

Prepare a 3-5 minute verbal explanation. Some people will ask you to "walk me through your poster." In making such a presentation, don't read the poster. Instead, give the big picture, explain why the problem is important, and use the graphics on your poster to illustrate and support your findings and recommendations.

Prepare a summary handout. You want people to remember your work – a handout provides a written record for readers. You can include a miniature version of your poster plus more detailed graphics, tables, and prose. The handout is something else you can refer to when talking to people about your work. Be sure to include complete contact information.

Poster title:

Presenter:

Instructions to reviewer: Use these criteria to rate the poster presentation on a scale of 1-5 (1=stongly disagree; 3=neutral; 5=strongly agree).

Appropriateness	
The poster presents the results of a **process-based, mechanistic model** rather than a statistical (curve-fitting) model. **Note well:** If "No" the poster is not appropriate and the score for the poster is zero.	No Yes
Appearance	**5 is strong agreement**
1. Display attracts viewer's attention.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Words are easy to read from an appropriate distance (3-5 feet).	1 2 3 4 5
3. Poster is well organized and easy to follow.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Graphics and other visuals enhance presentation.	1 2 3 4 5
5. The poster is neat and appealing to look at.	1 2 3 4 5
Content	
6. Content is clear and easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Purpose of model (question being addressed) is stated clearly.	1 2 3 4 5
8. I understand why someone might be interested in the model results.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Key simplifying assumptions are identified.	1 2 3 4 5
10. There is enough detail about methods (e.g., deriving rate equations and parameter values) for me to understand the model and results.	1 2 3 4 5
11. The approach taken is appropriate for the problem and technically sound.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Poster is free of unnecessary detail.	1 2 3 4 5
13. Conclusions are stated clearly.	1 2 3 4 5
14. Conclusions are supported by model results.	1 2 3 4 5
Presentation	
15. Presenter's response to questions demonstrated knowledge of subject matter and project.	1 2 3 4 5
16. Overall, this was a really good poster presentation.	1 2 3 4 5

Other comments (use other side)

Tip Sheet 3

Working with the Media

You'll probably want to get information about your community group and its work into the newspaper and on radio and TV news programs. To do this, you'll need to take a hard look at your work to discover a news angle – something to attract the interest of newspaper reporters and editor and radio or TN news director.

What makes news? Search Institute's "Assets Magazine" offered the list at the right. Other such lists have included money, taxes, health, sex, prominent people, crime, things that happen locally, the future.

conflict, prominence, proximity, impact, timeliness, surprise, interesting people or events, something new, trends and survey, something useful for a particular audience, evidence, solid facts, experts, diversity

Here's how to convince reporters and editors that your community group has a newsworthy story to tell.

- Tell them about results and outcomes of your project. For example, show how your work saves tax dollars, improves family life, helps local schools or public institutions or results in some other benefit to people in your community.
- Show them how your project is helping solve a local problem or address an important local issue.
- Use lots of local names of participants or partners. Show how important people in the community are involved.
- Point out how your group work is new or different (working in new ways, with new partners).
- Tell how the group responded rapidly to an emergency.
- Show how the community group has involved under-represented voices.

Here are some pointers for getting your story told in the media.

- Invite the media to attend special events or activities. Point out possible photo opportunities.
- Use the tips in Tip Sheet 1 to develop a strategic plan for your media work.
- Decide how you will approach reporters, editors and news directors. Will you prepare a news release? Will you arrange for reporters to visit sites and interview community group members and people who have benefited from your work? Will you hold a news conference? One or more of these techniques may fit best with your effort.
- During an interview, or in your news release, use the message points to telegraph important ideas about your group and your project.
- Invite someone from the media to be part of your community group.
- Keep communicating. One article in the newspaper is nice, but a series of articles and news broadcasts over time will make your story stick in people's minds.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Headline Announces News in Title Case, Ideally Under 80 Characters

The summary paragraph is a little longer synopsis of the news, elaborating on the news in the headline in one to four sentences. The summary uses sentence case, with standard capitalization and punctuation.

City, State (PRWEB) Month 1, 2006 -- The lead sentence contains the most important information in 25 words or less. Grab your reader's attention here by simply stating the news you have to announce. Do not assume that your reader has read your headline or summary paragraph; the lead should stand on its own.

A news release, like a news story, keeps sentences and paragraphs short, about three or four lines per paragraph. The first couple of paragraphs should answer the who, what, when, where, why and how questions. The news media may take information from a news release to craft a news or feature article or may use information in the release word-for-word, but a news release is not, itself, an article or a reprint.

The standard press release is 300 to 800 words and written in a word processing program that checks spelling and grammar before submission to PRWeb. This template is 519 words.

The ideal headline is 80 characters long. PRWeb will accept headlines with a maximum of 170 characters. PRWeb recommends writing your headline and summary last, to be sure you include the most important news elements in the body of the release. Use title case in the headline only, capitalizing every word except for prepositions and articles of three characters or less.

The rest of the news release expounds on the information provided in the lead paragraph. It includes quotes from key staff, customers or subject matter experts. It contains more details about the news you have to tell, which can be about something unique or controversial or about a prominent person, place or thing.

Typical topics for a news release include announcements of new products or of a strategic partnership, the receipt of an award, the publishing of a book, the release of new software or the launch of a new Web site. The tone is neutral and objective, not full of hype or text that is typically found in an advertisement. Avoid directly addressing the consumer or your target audience. The use of "I," "we" and "you" outside of a direct quotation is a flag that your copy is an advertisement rather than a news release.

Do not include an e-mail address in the body of the release. If you do, it will be protected from spambots with a notice to that effect, which will overwrite your e-mail address.

"The final paragraph of a traditional news release contains the least newsworthy material," said Mario Bonilla, member services director for PRWeb. "But for an online release, it's typical to restate and summarize the key points with a paragraph like the next one."

For additional information on the news that is the subject of this release (or for a sample, copy or demo), contact Mary Smith or visit www.prweb.com. You can also include details on product availability, trademark acknowledgment, etc. here.

About XYZ Company:

Include a short corporate backgrounder, or "boilerplate," about the company or the person who is newsworthy before you list the contact person's name and phone number.

Contact:
Mary Smith, director of public relations
XYZ Company
555-555-5555
http://www.prweb.com

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(Source: http://www.prwebdirect.com/pressreleasetips.php#template)

Fill-In-The-Blanks AmeriCorps Press Release Form

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(insert date here)

CONTACT:
(insert name & telephone number here)

(Organization Name) Makes a Difference in the Lives of Children

During 1998, (insert the amount of members you have here) AmeriCorps members at (insert your organization name here) helped improve (or increase) (insert your outcomes here) for many of the (insert the number of people or families you served here) individuals (or families) it serves. In return for a modest living allowance and an educational award of roughly $5,000, these AmeriCorps members, aged (insert age range of members here), serve their community full-time for a year. They provide (insert a description of activities offered here) to (insert a description of individuals served here). According to results from (insert description of the measure here) this helps individuals (or families) improve (or increase) (insert your outcome here) by (insert your numerical evaluation results on outcomes accomplished here). In addition, (Insert organization name here) helped individuals (insert any other significant outcomes here).

To (insert a served individual's full name here), for one, (insert organization name here) has made a tremendous difference. (Insert a 5-15 sentence success story for this individual here. Include what their original problem or situation was, how they came to work with your AmeriCorps member, what they did with the AmeriCorps member, what happened or changed and, if possible a quote from the individual or member talking about the change in their life.)

(Insert organization name here) was established in (insert year here) to (insert organization mission here). Since then it has served over (insert a conservative estimate of individuals here) in (insert town, city, or county you serve here). (Insert organization name here) receives support from (insert list of principal funders here). However, (insert organization name here) also relies on local support in the form of cash and in-kind contributions and volunteer time. For more information about (insert organization name here) services, or how you can help, including becoming an AmeriCorp member, please contact (insert name of staff person here) at (insert phone number here) or at (insert email address here).

Communications Plan Worksheet

Stakeholder/ Audience *(Who)*	**Communication Method** *(How)*	**Timing** *(When)*	**Frequency** *(How Often)*	**Budget** *(How much)*	**Priority** *(High, Med, Low)*	**Notes**