# UNIT-11 : WRITING AND REWRITING FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS


11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction: What is PR writing?

11.3 Difference between news writing and PR writing

11.4 Types of PR writing

11.5 Guidelines of writing for PR

11.6 Let Us Sum Up

11.7 Further Reading

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.9 Model Questions


## 11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- understand the role of writing in Public Relations
- learn how to write for different vehicles of Public Relations

## 11.2 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING?

Public relations (PR) refer to the ways in which organisations, companies and individuals communicate with the public and media. A PR specialist communicates with the target audience directly or indirectly through media with an aim to create and maintain a positive image and create a strong relationship with the audience. A PR professional thus, needs to have very strong communication skills.

Writing is an important communication skill that PR professionals must be adept in. They are responsible for developing communication materials intended to influence the attitudes and/or behaviours of key publics. Written communication is an essential part of a successful public relations plan. With properly structured written communication, there is less room for

statement on an issue that deals with public relations can be circulated among company employees, the press and the general public. A public relations professional must often address several different types of target audiences at the same time. A written public relations statement can appeal to several target audiences at the same time and address concerns collectively. Written communication can be circulated and referred to by any member of the organization at any time.

The creation of compelling content is thus a fundamental communication skill for a PR professional. Therefore, it is critical to understand how to craft effective messages through written communication.

## 11.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEWS WRITING AND PR WRITING

Effective public relations writing draws from news writing principles, because the news media is one of the preferred channels for promoting products and services. However, news writing and public relations writing differ in terms of audience, tone, and media channels.

News writing should be objective in tone, with the purpose of presenting information to educate an audience about newsworthy events. On the other hand, public relations writing advocates for the client. It is informative, but it should also influence key publics' perception of the organization. Some would also argue that a public relations writing is even more concise than new writing.

Reporters usually write for one audience: readers or listeners of the respective media outlet. Public relations professionals may have to write for a variety of audiences, including internal audiences (such as employees, shareholders, and distributors) and external audiences (such as the media, customers, volunteers, and bloggers). News writing uses one primary communication channel, the news outlet (which can be a newspaper or a television or radio broadcast). Public relations professionals use a variety of channels to distribute their messages, including news media, social

media, advertisements, blogs, press kits, and many more.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q. 1. Why should PR professionals be adept in writing skills?

.....

.....

.....

Q. 2. What are the differences between news writing and PR writing?

.....

.....

.....

## 11.4 TYPES OF PR WRITING

**Press Release**

A press release is a written communication that reports specific but brief information about an event, or other news related to a business or organization and is provided to media by the organization itself. Typically, they are mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to assignment editors and journalists at newspapers, magazines, radio stations, online media, television stations or television networks. Technically, anything deliberately sent to a reporter or media source is considered a press release: it is information released by the act of being sent to the media. However, public relations professionals often follow a standard format that they believe is efficient and increases their odds of getting the publicity they desire.

Some of these common structural elements include:

- **Headline** – used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news.
- **News Embargo**

  In journalism and public relations, a **news embargo** is a request by a source that the information or news provided by that source not be

published until a certain date or certain conditions have been made.

**Dateline** – contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release. If the date listed is after the date that the information was actually sent to the media, then the sender is requesting a **news embargo**, which journalists are under no obligation to honour.

- **Introduction** – first paragraph in a press release, that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why.
- **Body** – further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news.
- **Boilerplate** – generally a short "about" section, providing independent background on the issuing company, organization, or individual.
- **Close**- A symbol ### added, usually after the press release content and before the media contact information, signalling the end of the press release. Sometimes the symbol is also used after the contact information.
- **Media contact information** – name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other media relations contact person.



**News Embargo**

In journalism and public relations, a **news embargo** is a request by a source that the information or news provided by that source not be published until a certain date or certain conditions have been made

## Backgrounders

A backgrounder is an informational document often provided with a press release, press advisory or as part of a larger media kit. The backgrounder gives the press or other interested parties a more detailed background of an issue, event or launch. The purpose of a backgrounder is to give a brief history of an issue or an event that is more and beyond the information included in a press release or press advisory. The backgrounder provides more information to the journalist or media outlet without compromising the readability or standard format of the media advisory or press release.

Typical sections of a backgrounder may include history of the organization, event or topic at hand, applicable statistics or other data, the names, descriptions and qualifications of important people within the

organization, direct statements about why the event or issue is applicable and worth covering in today's news cycle (and in general), geographical or population data related to the issue, and a couple of emotive, interesting vignettes that the journalist could use to create their story.

Backgrounder documents may be used as part of a media kit, such as one stored on an organization's website or given out in hard copy during a press event. A backgrounder is also known as a Fact Sheet.

**Position Papers**

Position papers generally refer to piece of writing which clearly reflects the position or the opinion of an author/individual about a particular issue. In the realm of Public Relations, position paper refers to the public announcement which is released by an organization or company to let people know of its stand or opinion on some important issue. Often organizations publish position papers to establish clearly their stand in the midst of controversies circled around the organization.

The following structure is typical of a position paper:

- An introduction
- Identification of the issue
- Statement of the position
- The body
- Background information
- Supporting evidence or facts
- A discussion of both sides of the issue
- A conclusion
- Suggested courses of action
- Possible solutions

The introduction should clearly identify the issue and state the organization's position. It should be written in a way that catches the reader's attention. The body of the position paper may contain several paragraphs. Each paragraph should present an idea or main concept that clarifies a

portion of the position statement and is supported by evidence or facts. Evidence can be primary source quotations, statistical data, interviews with experts, and indisputable dates or events. Evidence should lead, through inductive reasoning, to the main concept or idea presented in the paragraph. The body may begin with some background information and should incorporate a discussion of both sides of the issue. The conclusion should summarize the main concepts and ideas and reinforce, without repeating, the introduction or body of the paper. It could include suggested courses of action and possible solutions

**Tip Sheets**

A **tip sheet** is a publication containing the latest information, tips or predictions for a particular industry. It is a news release that offers advice or tips in a bulleted or numbered format. It is one of the most useful tactics available for generating publicity. A tip sheet is used to generate short column notes in a newspaper or magazine or to interest a reporter, editor or producer in a feature article or talk show interview on the tip sheet topic.

In its basic form, a tip sheet comprises one page of around 5-12 tips on a particular topic. The format should incorporate a short introduction followed by a series of numbered tips. Ideally the tip sheet is one page in length written concisely and with the organisation's contact details at the end.

Like the heading on a media release, the heading on a tip sheet should attract the interest of the reader, and therefore you should write it carefully. The number of tips should be referred to in the heading itself. This helps to create precision and implies you are an expert on the topic. For example:
"12 expert tips to help you accomplish …"
''5 reasons why you should…"
"You can improve your … in 4 easy steps."
"Learn how to increase your… in 7 simple ways."

Make sure the tips are genuine, and don't include self-promotional wording in the text. Readers can spot a promo very quickly and will quickly discard your material if they think you are just using tips as a vehicle to plug for your product, service or organization instead of offering genuinely

helpful information.

In addition to being a tool for generating publicity, the content of a tip sheet is useful as a handout at conferences, seminars, exhibitions and trade shows, adding to your credibility as an industry thought leader.

**Newsletter Stories**

Corporate newsletters are an important tool to communicate with employees, clients, prospects, or suppliers. A **newsletter** is a printed report containing news (information) of the activities of a business or an organization (institutions, societies, associations) that is sent by mail regularly to all its members, customers, employees or people, who are interested in. Newsletters generally contain one main topic of interest to its recipients. Newsletter stories are typically brief and frequently consist of announcements of upcoming events or brief news items of interest to members of the organisation or stakeholders.

Newsletters are an effective way to broaden the organisation's reach and connect with its customers. In order to be effective, however, newsletters must present helpful, insightful articles that engage your readers and provide relevant, timely information. A well-developed newsletter is a smart marketing tool.

While writing a newsletter story, you must know their audience well. It is important to think from an audience perspective. Readers want to learn something new that is important and relevant to them. Even if it's an internal newsletter for employees, you should not overlook the importance of understanding their problems, their motives and what they are interested in.

It is ideal to follow the basic rules of journalism to develop professional newsletter articles. Start your stories out with a lead, which presents the most important information in a captivating and summarizing sentence. Write articles in inverted pyramid style, presenting the most important information early in the article and the less important information deeper into the story. By presenting the strongest information first, you can captivate readers and encourage them to read more.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q. 3. What are the structural elements of a Press Release?

.....

.....

.....

Q. 4. What is a Tip Sheet?

.....

.....

.....

Answering who, what, where, when, why, and how in your newsletter is a basic but helpful journalism technique that ensures that you provide information that readers need. Quotations from well-known and reputable sources can boost your article's impact.

## 11.5 GUIDELINES FOR WRITING FOR PR

In this unit, you have learned that writing for Public Relations is basically an art of persuasion. You are trying to convince the media, the public, your employees, your vendors, shareholders or someone, to do something - change their opinion, reinforce their attitude or purchase your service or product. How you write, and how well you deliver your message, can be the key factor for success.

Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind while writing for public relations.

- Grab attention with a good headline.
- Write in active voice. This will make your writing clear, concise and more colourful.
- Proofread thoroughly and avoid grammatical flaws.
- When using quotes, weave them into a narrative and place them in

context.

- Use strong, active verbs and vivid descriptors but in a simple, fluid language.
- Be accurate with facts and information.
- Know your audience well. Write what is relevant and useful to them.



**ACTIVITIES**

1. Write a press release for an upcoming public event in your locality/ town/city along with a backgrounder and a tip sheet.
2. Identify an ongoing social issue of pertinence and write a position paper on behalf of a local NGO working for that issue.



## 11.6 LET US SUM UP

- Public relations (PR) refer to the ways in which organisations, companies and individuals communicate with the public and media.
- Writing is an important communication skill that PR professionals must be adept in. They are responsible for developing communication materials intended to influence the attitudes and/or behaviours of key publics.
- The creation of compelling content is thus a fundamental communications skill for a PR professional. Therefore, it is critical to understand how to craft effective messages through written communication.
- Effective public relations writing draws from news writing principles, because the news media is one of the preferred channels for promoting products and services. However, news writing and public relations writing differ in terms of audience, tone, and media channels.

- News writing should be objective in tone, with the purpose of presenting information to educate an audience about newsworthy events. On the other hand, public relations writing advocates for the client.
- A press release is a written communication that reports specific but brief information about an event, or other news related to a business or organization and is provided to media by the organization itself.
- A backgrounder is an informational document often provided with a press release, press advisory or as part of a larger media kit. The backgrounder gives the press or other interested parties a more detailed background of an issue, event or launch.
- Position paper is a public announcement which is released by an organization or company to let people know of its stand or opinion on some important issue.
- A tip sheet is a publication containing the latest information, tips or predictions for a particular industry. It is a news release that offers advice or tips in a bulleted or numbered format and is used to generate short column notes in a newspaper or magazine or to interest a reporter, editor or producer in a feature article or talk show interview on the tip sheet topic.
- Newsletter stories are an effective way to broaden the organisation's reach and connect with its customers. It is ideal to follow the basic rules of journalism to develop professional newsletter articles.



## 11.7 FURTHER READINGS

Wilcox, D.L and Reber, B.H (2013), Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques, Pearson.



## 11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q. No 1 :** Writing is an important communication skill that PR professionals must be adept in as they are responsible for developing communication materials intended to influence the attitudes and/or behaviours of key publics. Written communication is an essential part of a successful public relations plan. With properly structured written communication, there is less room for misinterpretation than with verbal communication. A single corporate statement on an issue that deals with public relations can be circulated among company employees, the press and the general public. A public relations professional must often address several different types of target audiences at the same time. A written public relations statement can appeal to several target audiences at the same time and address concerns collectively. Written communication can be circulated and referred to by any member of the organization at any time.

**Ans to Q. No 2 :** News writing and public relations writing differ in terms of audience, tone, and media channels. News writing is objective in tone, with the purpose of presenting information to educate an audience about newsworthy events. On the other hand, public relations writing advocates for the client. It is informative, but it should also influence key publics' perception of the organization. Some would also argue that a public relations writing is even more concise than new writing. Reporters usually write for one audience: readers or listeners of the respective media outlet. Public relations professionals may have to write for a variety of audiences, including internal audiences (such as employees, shareholders, and distributors) and external audiences (such as the media, customers, volunteers, and bloggers). News writing uses one primary communication channel, the news outlet (which can be a newspaper or a television or radio broadcast). Public relations professionals

use a variety of channels to distribute their messages, including news media, social media, advertisements, blogs, press kits, and many more.

**Ans to Q. No 3 :** Some of these common structural elements include:

**Headline** – used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news.

**Dateline** – contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release. If the date listed is after the date that the information was actually sent to the media, then the sender is requesting a **news embargo**, which journalists are under no obligation to honour.

**Introduction** – first paragraph in a press release, that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why.

**Body** – further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news.

**Boilerplate** – generally a short "about" section, providing independent background on the issuing company, organization, or individual.

**Close**- A symbol ### added, usually after the press release content and before the media contact information, signalling the end of the press release. Sometimes the symbol is also used after the contact information.

**Media contact information** – name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other media relations contact person.

**Ans to Q. No 4 : A tip sheet** is a publication containing the latest information, tips or predictions for a particular industry. It is a news release that offers advice or tips in a bulleted or numbered format. It's one of the most useful tactics available for generating publicity. A tip sheet is used to generate short column notes in a newspaper or magazine or to interest a reporter, editor or producer in a feature article or talk show interview on the tip sheet topic.



## 11.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**A. Very Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words):

Q.1 : What do you mean by news embarge?

Q.2 : Why is a book grocender often provided with a press release?

Q.3. "The creation of compelling content is a fundamental communication skill for a PR proffesional" – Expalin.

Q.4. Why corporate newsletters are considered to be an important tool to communicate with employees?

**B. Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words):

Q. 1. What are position papers? What is the common format of writing a position paper?

Q. 2. What are the different types of PR writing? Briefly describe.