

Writing from News Releases and News Conferences Tipsheet

By Doug Cospers

“A reporter must go out and capture the news. Only publicity comes to the newsroom to surrender.”

News Releases can be valuable resources for reporters, but remember that they are produced for one primary purpose: to influence the opinions of your readers through your story.

Tips on writing from a news releases

- Treat it as a news tip, usually little else.
- Check for the 5Ws and H.
- Look for what is new and interesting.
- Look for unanswered questions, holes and what is NOT said.
- Call the contact people for verification, elaboration, clarification or a new angle.
- Call sources who might provide balance for the story.
- Talk to people whose lives are directly affected by the release.
- Add background and context.
- Consider putting the information into a calendar of events or briefs if it doesn't make a story.

News conferences can be valuable resources for reporters, but remember that they are produced for one primary purpose: to influence the opinions of your readers through your story.

Tips for covering news conferences:

- Be prepared. Do your homework.
- Arrive early, leave late.
- Sit up front where you can see and hear the action.
- Get business cards for correct spellings and titles.
- Note the mannerisms of participants.
- Cover the event – look around the edges at the audience (size, reaction).
- It's ok to clarify quotes after the conference, and always best to get new quotes and angles. Remember, if you ask a question during the conference, everyone will have the answer. If you wait until afterwards, you will have the scoop.
- Be sure you have the 5Ws and H before you leave the building.
- **WRITE WHAT WAS SAID, NOT THAT SOMEONE HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE.**