UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

HOW TO WRITE A NEWS RELEASE

In all writing, follow the [UH style guidelines](#) for tone. "While the brand voice takes some creative liberty with standard AP writing style, most of what we communicate should adhere to the University's [Editorial Style Guide](#)."

Start strong. Your headline and first paragraph should tell the story. The rest of your news release should provide the detail. You have a matter of seconds to grab your reader's attention.

Use active, not passive, voice. Verbs in the active voice bring your news release to life. Rather than writing "entered into a partnership" use "partnered" instead. Do not be afraid to use strong verbs as well. For example, "The committee exhibited severe hostility over the incident." reads better if changed to "The committee was enraged over the incident." Writing in this manner helps guarantee that your news release will be read.

End with an "About" section. Your news release should end with a short paragraph (boilerplate) that describes your department. If you are filing a joint news release include a boilerplate for both organizations.

Standard news release format. Communicate the "5 Ws" (and the H) clearly. Who, what, when, where, why ––and how–– should tell the reader everything they need to know. See below for an example:

- Who is this about? *A staff member, organization or department*
- What is the actual news? *New event, changes to an organization, updates from your department*
- When does this happen? *Provide the exact date, mention if it is new, annual, etc*
- Where does this take place? *On-campus, off-campus*
- Why this is news? *What makes this news worthy of a release? Why does it matter to your audience?*
- How is this happening? *Collaboration, donation, partnership?*

With the basics defined, fill in the gaps with information about the people, products, items, dates and other things related with the news.

NEWS RELEASE TIPS

- **Know your why:** Before you begin writing your news release, ask yourself why this information needs to be shared. Identify what information is the most important to your reader and outline what you want them to gain by reading your news release.

- **Know the alternatives:** First, ask yourself whether a news release is the best way to share this particular news or announcement. Consider alternatives that may be just as effective—if not more effective—than news releases, including social media updates or website posts.

- **Avoid internal speak:** Be as clear as possible. Take the time to fully understand all aspects of the news release, and translate technical, higher ed jargon into terms that speak directly to your audience.

- **Quotes:** Providing a quote strengthens your message and can give context to what is being said in your release. Consider including a quote from an event attendee/participant or from your department Director.

- **Highlight connections to your department goals or initiatives:** Part of telling your story is connecting what is going on in your department with the bigger picture.

The following can be used as a template for your news release.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Contact Person
Department
555-555-5555
Email
Department website address

Headline - Be creative and use attention-grabbing words. One sentence. Use proper sentence case, capitalizing every word except for the following articles: of, it, the, a, an, from, and, is, by...

City, State, Month, Day, Year -- Grab attention here. A strong introductory paragraph should cover who, what, when, where, why and how.

The lead, or first sentence, should grab the reader and say concisely what is happening. For example, if the headline is "UH Establishes Collegiate Recovery Program," the first sentence might be something like, "The University of Houston initiated the first collegiate recovery program, Cougars in Recovery, at the start of the fall 2013 semester." It expands the headline enough to fill in some of the details, and brings the reader further into the story. The next one to two sentences should then expand upon the lead.

Put the body of your news release here. Expound on the information provided in your introductory paragraph. The first paragraph (two to three sentences) should sum up the news release, and the additional content must elaborate it. The body of your news release should contain more than one paragraph.

Include quotes from key staff, customers or subject matter experts.

The final paragraph should restate and summarize the key points of your news release.

For additional information, contact (include contact information here)/visit (insert weblink).

End with **About your department.**