

The media refers to the people and organisations behind mass communication. They have three primary purposes: to inform, to educate, to entertain.

Why contact the media

- ▶ The media are always interested in good stories about people in their community doing new and different things.
- ▶ Media exposure enables you to inform and educate a larger number of people about your issue – you may be entertaining too.
- ▶ Media coverage of young people taking action on behalf of others helps build a positive image and change negative ones that may exist.
- ▶ Provides first-hand experience of the media for your students, which will increase their understanding of this important influence in their lives.

How to contact the media

There is no set formula that guarantees the media will publish your story. This suggested plan of action is flexible and should be adapted to suit your individual situation.

Step 1

Reflect on and answer the following three questions:

- ▶ What is my story? Look for high-interest, unusual, human-impact angles that will help your story stand out from the rest
- ▶ What key message do I want to convey?
- ▶ Who do I want to reach with my story?
Who is the target audience?

Step 2

Select which media outlets are most likely to use your story and/or reach your target audience. If more than one media outlet, choose one that will be the most effective.

Consider: newspaper, radio and TV both locally and nationally.

Step 4

Contact your chosen media outlet – by phone is best. Ask to speak to:

- ▶ Newspaper – chief reporter
- ▶ Radio and TV – news desk, chief reporter, or identify the particular show and ask for the producer

Step 3

Prepare a press release.

See *Tips for writing a successful press release*

Step 5

Explain your story succinctly in a way that convinces them this story is worth publishing; the media are interested but busy.

Step 6

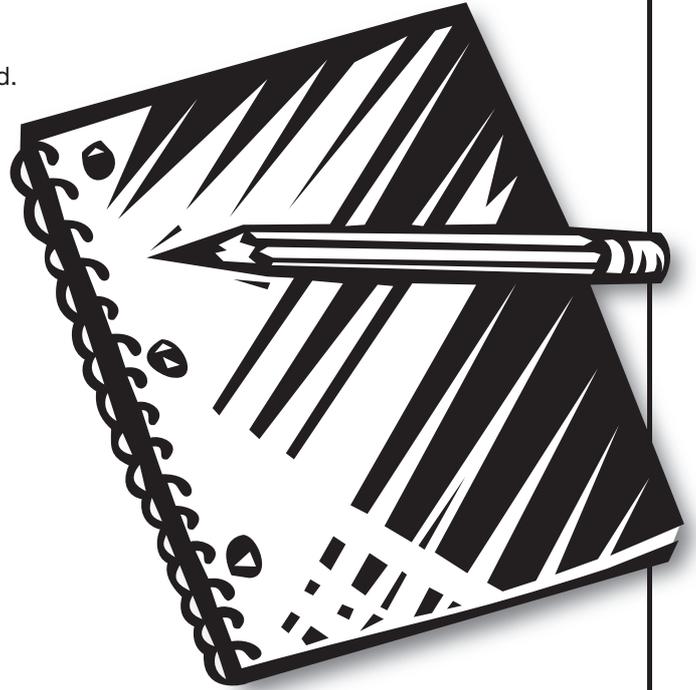
Depending on the interest and response:

- ▶ Offer to fax/email further details (the press release and possibly photos)
- ▶ Invite them to come and interview and take photos

Tips for writing a successful press release

A successful press release is one that gets published. In order for this to happen you will need to:

- ▶ Consider your audience – what will interest them or grab their attention
- ▶ Start with a headline that is dramatic, clever or memorable
- ▶ Follow with an opening sentence about something unusual, startling or interesting
- ▶ Mention the key facts of the story in brief, early on
- ▶ Tell the story by answering questions raised in the readers’ minds by your opening - fill in the details, in an interesting way
- ▶ Avoid passive language – use simple, active and direct language instead



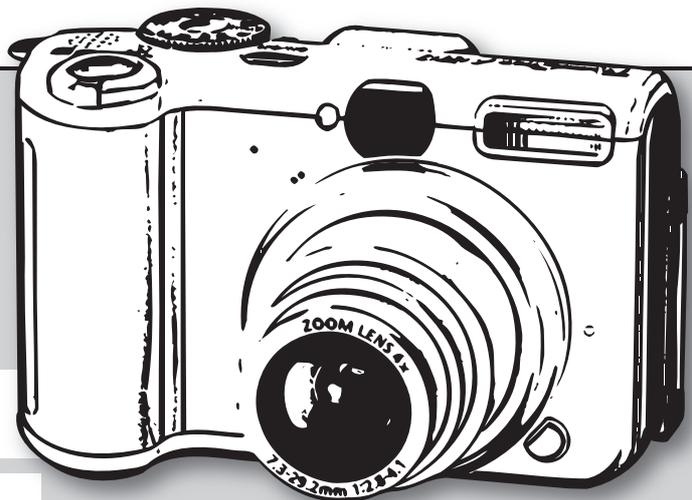
- ▶ Include a photo of people in action
- ▶ Have your name and contact details at the end

Tips for taking a successful photo

Remember a good photo is worth a thousand words. It can sell your story to the media.

Study photos in a newspaper to see what gets published. Try to:

- ▶ Get close to your subject and fill the frame
- ▶ Focus on people not things
- ▶ Use good background or props to help tell the story
- ▶ Avoid clichéd images – instead use imagination and creativity



- ▶ Use a flash, even in broad daylight – it eliminates shadows
- ▶ Take a number of shots to increase the chance of taking the magic image