

Press Releases

Writing press releases is a good way for your team to get in touch with the media. Benefits include getting quick media coverage, letting the community know what is going on with your team, and making sure the media has accurate information before they publish a story. Before you can write a press release you need to know where to send your press releases. In the old days (1995) one would fax a press release but today it is common that newspapers and other media outlets will prefer emails (which is more convenient for you as well if you think about it). On many websites they will have their contact information, or if you think about it, it'll probably be in the published medium.

So, writing the press release itself, well first let's start at the basics: formatting. Your press release will never be longer than one page long. Most press releases are your typical 12-point, Times New Roman, single spaced format. I usually like to justify my press release body so it looks a little bit cleaner. Also between paragraphs, I never indent; I hit "enter" to create that space between the paragraphs.

The first thing to do is right align the document at the top, this will be in all caps and type, "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE", this tells the media they can write or release this story now, it's also just a traditional technicality. On the next line, left justify and put your main contact information, this includes "name", "phone number" and "email" each of these is on their own separate line.

Okay, now the title of the press release, it's bold, in all capital letters, and centered; it's usually something that will capture the interest of the media and a lot of times this will also be the headline they use if they publish the story, so make it a good one. The next line, also centered is the subtitle and it will be regular case and not bolded, much like a normal title would be for a book. This goes into further depth of the first title, so if you didn't get to say everything you wanted in the first title, well you can save it for the second one.

Now the body of the press release, it is important to know what writing style in which to write. I try to make it as black and white as possible, little fluff, and have as much information as possible. The important thing to note is that you'll be writing by the "inverted pyramid" format. (Yes even though it is normally shown as a two dimensional object, it is still called a pyramid, so just get over it.) The inverted pyramid method is basically this: put all of the important stuff in the first paragraph and end with the "fluff". The first paragraph should always include the five basic questions of who, what, where, why, and when.

The first paragraph of the body will start in all caps; with the place this release is talking about, or what event this release is written from followed by a comma and the city this event takes place. For example, "THE GEORGIA DOME, ATLANTA". Then the release will have a long dash "—" with the date in traditional format and another long dash after. After this, you may start the first body paragraph but make sure you answer the five basic questions before moving on to the next paragraph, and it's even easier because in the first line you already answered the where and when.

The second body paragraph goes into further depth of whatever the subject of the press release is. It is common to include a quotation from someone in the company or team about the event, usually showing the organization in a positive light. It is important to get quotations that way it gives the media a quotation to work with and so it can

provide depth of the subject at hand from a different perspective. The third body paragraph is similar to the second. Look at the sample press release on one of the following pages.

The final paragraphs are what are known in the industry as “boilerplates”. This is a blurb about your organization that shows your history. It’s similar to a mission statement; in fact parts of your mission statement should be in there. This will never change throughout all your press releases, it will be the last thing the reader sees, it is the conclusion of your press release. If you write a joint press release or a press release that involves other organizations, put their boilerplate in the release as well, but not after your own.

At the end of the press release it is traditional to center three “pound” (tic-tac-toe) symbols (###) signifying the end of the press release so the people you send it to aren’t looking for another paper or further information. Some organizations will put their contact information at the bottom again, but I personally find it a little redundant.

Hopefully this guide sheet will help you write a press release, they aren’t as bad as it seems and once you get good at it, you could probably write one in no more than twenty minutes, just before you send it make sure someone proof reads it, you don’t want to sell your organization short with something that could be fixed with a little proofing.

On the following page is an actual press release from the 2007-2008 season.

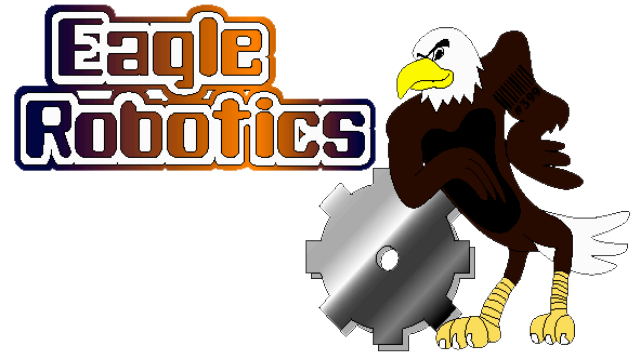
For Immediate Release

Lancaster High School Eagle Robotics

P R E S S R E L E A S E

For Details, Contact:

Kevin Spoelstra
Lead Advisor
Direct Phone: 661-726-7649 x241



Eagle Robotics Soars to New Heights

After almost ten weeks of strenuous work on the part of Lancaster High School's Eagle Robotics students their hard work paid off in the best way imaginable. On March 22nd at the FIRST Los Angeles Regional, the Eagle Robotics Team 399 was awarded with the most prestigious award available, the Chairman's Award, for the second year in a row! The Chairman's Award is given to the team that exemplifies what FIRST is all about, the inspiration of science and technology, sportsmanship, leadership, and community outreach.

"The best thing about winning Chairman's is that the perks that come with being a Chairman's Award winning team allows us to take our outreach to an even greater level," says Emma Reed, a member of the media sub team. With events such as Robot Read Alouds, Blood Drives, the High Desert LEGO Tournament, and participation in the California Poppy Festival, Antelope Valley Board of Trade, and the Adopt-A-Plane program, Eagle Robotics soars above and beyond to reach out to everyone and every aspect of their community.

"Our team united this year to enhance our programs from last year and to start brand new ones," says Danielle Clarke, the secretary of the team. When the emcee announced Team 399 as the Chairman's winning team, the students flocked to the stage with an abundance of excitement. It was clear that the every team member was a part of a unified family, and every member was congratulating each other, proud of one another's achievements and of how far they had come in the past year. Team 399 will fly off to Atlanta, Georgia on April 17th to participate in the FIRST Championship competition.

For nine years Eagle Robotics has brought science and technology into the lives of Lancaster High School students. They have been fortunate enough to be granted the gracious support of sponsors such as ITEA, NASA Dryden, HR Textron, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, AVHSD, INCOTECH, and many more.

Eagle Robotics is a part of F.I.R.S.T. (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology). F.I.R.S.T. has been encouraging the advancement of technical and scientific education in High Schools worldwide for sixteen years and has spread to all fifty states and six countries.

###