



Press releases

The press release is one of the most widely used communication tools and the classic interface between science and the media. It is intended to arouse the interest of journalists and provide them with ideas for their stories.

Media coverage (e.g. TV reports or newspaper stories) provides an opportunity for researchers to generate more awareness of their activities – from other disciplines, funding agencies, industry, potential donors or students. Being present in the media can lead to new contacts, even influence scientific citations of findings, and increase the chances of funding. Press releases that generate media coverage are therefore an indirect tool for engaging in dialogue with the general public – often with the aim of promoting understanding and trust in research and research institutions. The news may be about important research findings, grants or awards. However, to stand a chance in the daily competition for attention, the press release needs to deliver a message that is relevant to a broad audience and is easy to understand. Think about the purpose of the text, as well as the news content: Can you say it in simple terms in 30 seconds? Always remember that you are addressing a large lay audience. You therefore need to tailor your story to that audience.

Incidentally, it happens every day at larger research institutions that scientists ask the communications department to produce a press release and the communications experts immediately realises that the topic is not of interest to the media. In such conflict situations, communications professionals often have to compromise, as they don't want to overwhelm journalists, but they don't want to upset the scientists either. The solution is often to produce a news item for the university's or research centre's website. The news is published without the push procedure of sending out press releases.

