



# Vinyl Fence *Tip*

## Practical and Proven Ways to Sell More Vinyl Fences

*From your friends at National Vinyl Products*

### How to Write and Submit a News Release



Do ever wonder why some small businesses get news coverage for their new products or promotions when you don't? It's because they let newspapers, journals and websites know about it! Editors want content.

A news release should cover a newsworthy event or topic that is of interest to people outside your organization including:

- A new or improved fence product or fencing service
- A response to a crisis
- Latest sales figures
- Industry data, trends or perspectives
- Annual convention or trade show
- Employee honors

When you send out a news release to your local newspaper, local TV station, fencing industry website or a trade organization's newsletter, you are able to tell your story in your own way. You also position your company for further news coverage. Editors may publish it as written, or they may ask for more information or to speak with you in an interview.

#### How to Write a News Release

##### **1. The Headline**

Start your press release with a brief, attention-grabbing headline. A snappy headline can make the difference between an editor reading your release or hitting the delete button. A strong headline gives enough information to capture enough interest so that the reader will want to know more.

You may type the headline in bold but avoid all caps and exclamation points. If you have more pertinent

information than will fit in a one-line headline, you might include an italicized subhead.

##### **2. The Body**

The body of a standard press release contains a dateline, which includes your company's city and state and the date of your release. Then begin your article with a concise lead paragraph that answers most or all of the five W's: *who, what, when, where and why*.

Many busy editors will only read the headline and the first paragraph of a release to determine if it is of interest to their readership, so avoid anything vague or general. Keep the information concise and interesting.

Quotes from you (yes, you can quote yourself in the third person) or members of your team add credibility to the release. Be sure to spell names correctly and identify each source's position within your company. Editors like to use direct quotes in stories and often will use them verbatim.

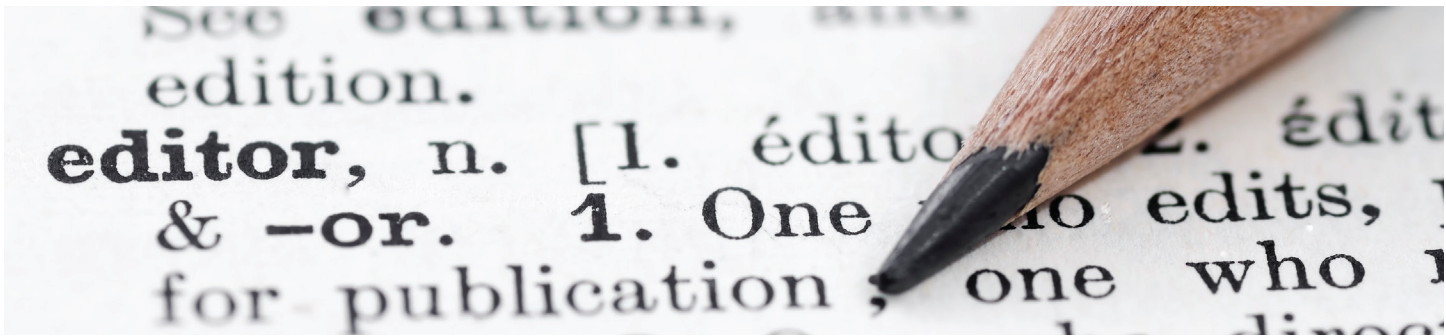
##### **3. The Boilerplate**

Your final paragraph should include a brief history and description of your fencing company. You can re-use this "boilerplate" on every news release you send out. Many boilerplates begin with "About (your company name)." It's a good idea to add a link to your website and social media pages to help editors find more information easily.

##### **4. Contact Information**

Be sure to include contact information for editors and reporters who would like to interview you or see some photos. If possible, offer more than one contact phone number (perhaps an office landline and your mobile number) as well as an email address to make things easy for the writer.





## Hints

1. Put the most important news in the first paragraph.
2. Cover the five W's in order to give the editor full information. Check your spacing. Use one space after punctuation, for example.
3. Nix that Oxford comma. AP Style dictates that you drop that last comma before the "and" in a list or series of words.
4. Use full name and title when you first mention someone. After that introduction, just use the last name.
5. Spell out numbers one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and up.
6. Abbreviate months that have more than five letters and use numbers for dates.
7. Proofread your work and double check all names, dates, phone numbers and URLs for accuracy.
8. Keep your release to one page in length. If editors would like more information, they will contact you.
9. Write your release in the third person, not the first or second person.

For consistency and professionalism, review guidelines set by the Associated Press (AP) style for your press release. You can purchase and print the current AP Stylebook at [www.apstylebook.com](http://www.apstylebook.com) or you can get many AP rules from the Purdue University Writing Lab at <https://owl.purdue.edu/>.

## Get Your Release to The Right Editor or Reporter

Don't just send your release out in the dark and expect it to get where you want it to go.

It can just take a few minutes to make sure you have the correct editor's name and email address for your release. You might just need to check website contact information or make a quick phone call. If you don't know who to send a release to, call or email the publication and ask. Build a list of media contacts and personalize the cover letter that accompanies your release with an editor's name.

Many journalists use software programs to organize press releases by the subjects they cover. When you include keywords, there is a better chance that your release will get to the right reporter. Use keywords that connect your news with your hometown for traditional coverage, but also try to include any new fencing industry buzzwords or Twitter hashtags to get the editor's or writer's attention.

Knowing when to send a press release is important too. Many marketing experts believe an email sent between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. has the best chance of being read, for instance. The theory is that editors are finished with their morning work and are finished with lunch. Yet they are not yet heading out the door for the day.

Another option is to send your printed release through the mail. Releases and photos sent through the mail often stand out as being more critical.

Finally, if your release is not published, you can use it as a way to start a conversation with an editor. Ask how you can target your news more effectively next time. Reveal your knowledge about their publication by mentioning articles or columns they run. You might even suggest a feature article about your fencing company as part of this conversation. Editors and writers are always looking for new article ideas.

## Your Story, Your Way

News releases allow you to give your take on events and to tell your story in your own words. That story can be prompted by good news or even not-so-good news.

Here's an example. Historians trace the first news release to 1906 and the aftermath of a deadly train accident in Atlantic City, N.J that killed more than 50 people. Realizing that the tragic event would bring negative attention to his client, the Pennsylvania Railroad, publicist Ivy Ledbetter Lee decided to take matters into his own hands.

Now recognized as the father of modern public relations, Lee wrote a statement about the railroad accident from his client's perspective and distributed it to newspapers. The New York Times printed Lee's press release word for word. Although modern media outlets rarely publish news releases verbatim today, they still serve as compelling starting points for many articles. Isn't it time to tell your fencing company's story?



If you have questions about this newsletter or marketing in general, e-mail NVP's marketing expert: [marketing@nvpfence.com](mailto:marketing@nvpfence.com).

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