

REPORTER

Steps to Success

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- ◆ Attend your Officer Team Meeting if one is held.
- ◆ Cut out copies of news articles you've written and had published in local newspapers.
- ◆ Cut out copies of photographs you took and submitted to local newspapers documenting club work.
- ◆ If you have access to a photocopier, you may want to copy the news articles and pictures and give copies to any of the members who are mentioned or pictured. They may be able to use these for record keeping or scrapbooking purposes, and it is simply a nice gesture.
- ◆ Mark any pictures that you need names for with a sticky note and put them with your meeting supplies. Be sure any photos you send to the media include only those kids that have signed photo release statements on file. Check this out with your club leader.
- ◆ Make sure your report time is on the agenda so that you can share your progress with the club.



DURING THE MEETING:

1. Arrive early to get organized for the meeting and be available to discuss items of business with the leaders and other officers if needed. Remember, you are part of an officer TEAM—make sure to do your part!
2. Be prepared to share news clippings about your club with the membership when you give your club report. After your report, give the clippings to the historian to include in the club scrapbook.
3. Take meeting notes on your report form.
4. Take pictures of the meeting and the activity or recreation. Don't forget to take pictures of Cloverbuds, club leaders, volunteers, and guest speakers. Additionally, make sure you know names of all those photographed and check with your club leader to make sure that everyone involved has agreed to be photographed.

AFTER THE MEETING:

1. Help with clean up after the meeting is over.
2. Write a news release and submit it to your local newspaper.



THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- ◆ Tell 4-H news in an accurate and interesting way.
- ◆ Write an article before the meeting to invite people to the meeting.
- ◆ Consult the club secretary if you need meeting information.
- ◆ Take accurate notes at each club meeting.
- ◆ Write a news story promptly after each meeting.
- ◆ Go to the newspaper to introduce yourself to the person responsible for local news stories.
- ◆ Take care of sending the news article to some select newspapers and radio stations. Refer to the handout called "Local Media Contacts '12".
- ◆ Try to include photographs with some articles for the newspaper.
- ◆ Read other 4-H and general news articles and try to improve your own.

WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO REACH WITH YOUR NEWS ARTICLES?

You should ask this question every time you begin a news release. You will soon learn that you are writing for a larger audience than current 4-H members. You are writing for people who are not well-acquainted with your 4-H club and its activities.



It is easy to fall into the trap of writing for club members, parents, and friends. But think about it. Many of that group probably attended your club meeting or got a first-hand report from those who did. They've been reached.

The big advantage of newspapers, radio, and other forms of mass media is that they can reach large numbers of people – more people than your club members can ever reach on a first-hand basis.

Use mass media to reach those who otherwise won't know what your club is doing. Members and friends will probably read what you write, but don't write for just the 4-H "family".

Ask yourself, "What should my neighbors know about what our 4-H club is doing?" This is your opportunity to show how your club is contributing to the community. Help your readers understand what happens in a 4-H club.

You will need to look at what happens at each meeting and activity and decide what you want them to know about most – and what they'll be most interested in. In most cases,

that report will focus on a particular activity of the club, or a unique part of the program. That you met, where you met, who made motions and seconded them, and all other information that is typically part of the secretary's minutes – really won't be very important to your story. Take care to single out what you believe will be most interesting, and build your story around that experience.

Read other meeting reports in you local newspapers, especially reports from groups you don't know about. Some will strike you as "ho-hum". Others will be interesting and full of information. That will help you judge what will be interesting and "ho-hum" about what you might write.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING NEWS RELEASES:

1. The first paragraph of the article is the most important. It sums up the rest of the article in one or more sentences.
2. The first paragraph tells who, what, why, where, when, and sometimes how. Decide which point (who, what, why, where, when, or how) is important, and start the sentence with that point.
3. After the first sentence, tell more about each of the points in the first sentence: who is involved, what will happen, when will it happen, why or how it will happen. A press release can be either in the present tense, telling of an event yet to come; or in past tense, describing what has already happened.
4. Use simple language in brief sentences. Include only those details that are necessary to the article. Paragraphs should be short. Use common and concrete words. Don't use jargon that others will not understand.
5. Use first and last names and the town in the person's address, such as Susan Bates, Browntown, WI; Tom McCall, Greenville, WI. Be absolutely certain all names are spelled correctly.
6. Report only recent news. Old items are not new, so they aren't NEWS.
7. Write your article following the "Suggested News Release Format". Be accurate.
8. Recopy or, if possible, type the article.
9. After the article is typed or recopied, immediately take it, mail it or e-mail it to the newspaper and radio stations. At the newspapers, give or send it to the news editor. At the radio station, give or send it to the news director.
10. Address and stamp several envelopes at the beginning of the year; so that when an article is ready, it can be mailed immediately.

SUGGESTED NEWS RELEASE FORMAT

_____ 4-H Group

Name of your 4-H group

_____, Reporter

Your name

Your address

Your phone number

Your e-mail address

(Skip a line.)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Skip four lines.)

Headline

(Skip a line.)

Start the article here. If you type the article, double space it. If you write it by hand, write on every other line of lined paper.

End your article with “—END—”.

