

Why do we do Press Releases?

We use Press Releases to ensure that we shape the way in which Freemasonry is seen in our local, regional and national communities.

Freemasons do fantastic things for our communities, and we should make sure that the media outlets know about those things and the people that we are helping.

The guidance below is designed to help you produce better press releases and to get more of your stories published.

How to write a Press Release

Your press release has a better chance of getting a response if you know what should go into it. By following this format, you can write a release that tells your story and helps you get press coverage. At Appendix 1 there is an example which can adapt to produce your own press releases.

Write a clear, captivating headline

The headline is the first thing journalists see, so it's a crucial part of your press release. Write a headline that's both attention-grabbing and indicative of the key message you want to convey.

Your headline should convey the point of your story and capture your recipient's attention. One way of doing this is to look at the headlines of articles in the publication you're writing to and try to craft something similar.

Here are some neutral examples of recent Masonic press releases:

- Brotherly Lodge Freemasons celebrate Summer and raise €1,000 for local charities
- Local Freemasons host successful Charity Quiz Night

Include the release date and your location

Let the recipient know the date the press release is being issued (or the date of the event you're notifying them about), as well as the full name and location of your Lodge.

In normal circumstances you should include the phrase 'FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.' This tells journalists that the information contained in the press release can be made public right away.

Rarely, you might not want an article to be published straight away so you would use the phrase 'EMBARGOED UNTIL 9.00am ON 17th JULY 2024'.

Quickly tell them what they need to know

The opening paragraph — **the lead** — should contain the five Ws, telling a journalist all the most important facts:

- Who or what is this story about?
- What is happening?
- Where did it happen?
- When did it happen (or when will it happen)?
- Why is it important?

Then give more context

In the paragraphs that follow your introduction, include all the details of the story in descending order of importance. Keep it simple and straightforward. Write about what you have done and why you did it, but don't go into too much detail as it always detracts from the readability of the story.

Always write in short sentences and avoid the use of long words or terms which might not be understood by ordinary members of the public.

Be honest and unbiased

Journalists won't be fooled or amused by a press release making claims that lack credibility or are just subjective. When in doubt, just state the facts.

Don't use masonic jargon

Make sure your press release isn't full of masonic jargon and terms that don't mean anything to the average person. To check, ask a friend who isn't in your field to read your release. If they find it boring or complicated, edit it for clarity and conciseness.

Here are a few examples:

- Worshipful Master – perhaps use Master of the Lodge
- Brethren – perhaps use Freemasons or Members
- Temple – perhaps use Meeting Room
- Senior Warden – perhaps use Lodge Officer

Of course, if your story is solely designed for the internal website of the Province, then using Masonic terms is acceptable and welcomed. If you intend that your story be used internally and externally, then write two versions, one for internal use with Masonic terms and one for external use without.

Include relevant, colourful quotes

To add colour to your press releases, include bold, purposeful quotes. If you are the Worshipful Master, it could be something in your own words, or you could include a quote from a Brother who's important to this specific news item. It can be personal and opinionated, but make sure you attribute the quote. For example:

Commenting, John Smith, Master of the Brotherly Lodge, said "It has been a genuine pleasure for Judy and myself to have hosted so many friends and fellow Freemasons at our home today. As well as enjoying good food and great company, I am really proud that we have raised €1,000 for local Charities. Along with all of the Freemasons in our Lodge, we will now decide how to distribute this money and I look forward to presenting cheques to those charities in the very near future. I am delighted today's event will help less fortunate children and families in the Valencian area."

Include full resolution colour photographs and clearly describe who is in them or what they show

Journalists like photographs. A picture tells a thousand words. You do not need to be David Bailey to provide a quality photograph for use with your press release. A good modern camera phone takes very high-quality images.

Here are a few rules to be aware of:

- Don't embed your photographs in the press release. Send them separately with a description of what is happening and who is in the photograph. For example: Photograph of the winning Quiz team being presented with their prizes by the Master of the Lodge, John Smith.
- Always get permission from the people in a photograph before you send it to a newspaper or post it on social media.
- Never publish any photograph which would allow a member of the public to identify any individual as a Freemason unless that person has consented.
- Although we live in a hot country, you should not use photographs where Freemasons are not properly dressed. By this we mean that you should not show Freemasons wearing shorts, shirts without collars or open shoes, unless that is appropriate for the event. Casual is fine but we do want to portray Freemasonry in the best possible light!
- Identify the photographs by name, rather than the code often given by the camera-phone. (for example: Oliva LaSafor 112 BBQ Master, or Caledonia 68 Charity draw)

Sign off appropriately

You should sign off in a way that indicates the press release is over. We suggest that you place the word "ENDS" in the line immediately after the last word in your story.

Tell them who to contact (and how)

At the bottom of the press release, be sure to include contact details for the person you'd like them to follow up with, whether that's you or someone else in your Lodge. As a minimum always include a name and email address, and ideally a phone number. Also include website URLs and social media handles for your Lodge if applicable.

You can always include the details of the Provincial Communications Officer and please send a copy of your Press Release to him for distribution:

David Clarke – Communications Officer prensa@glpvalencia.com

Use a boilerplate paragraph which gives important information about your Lodge and about Freemasonry in general

At the bottom of your press releases, include a short description of your Lodge and include information about Freemasonry. You are welcome to use the example below:

Freemasons in Wherever

The Freemasons of Lodge Brotherly, are part of the World's largest non-religious fraternal organisation. The Lodge meets regularly in wherever and is committed to community service, fostering friendship and fellowship amongst its members and raising funds for local charities.

Common Mistakes when writing a Press Release

A well-written press release is a powerful tool for communicating essential information and generating media coverage. However, several common mistakes can undermine their effectiveness.

Pay attention to proper formatting and style

Poor formatting and style can detract from the professionalism of your press release. Ensure that your document sticks with a clear structure — as outlined in this press release template — that includes a release date, a headline, clear and concise paragraphs telling your story, contact details, and a boilerplate paragraph.

Ensure thorough proofreading and editing

Typos, grammatical errors, and inconsistencies will diminish the credibility of your press release. Make sure you and a fellow Brother thoroughly proofread the release and edit it to eliminate any mistakes before it's sent out.

In a busy Newsroom, journalists are under huge pressure to produce stories to fill printed publications. If they also have a website, the pressure to publish new stories is even greater. This is because the majority of local publications use an advertising business model and want to generate “clicks” to their websites. The more clicks you generate, the more attractive and lucrative is your advertising space.

If your Press Release is well written, formatted properly and is accompanied by high quality photographs which are relevant to the story, many journalists will simply “cut and paste” them into their website and publication.

Bro. David Clarke ProvAGChStwd

Communications Officer

June 2024

Appendix 1 – Example Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Valencian Freemasons host successful Charity Quiz Night

On May 14th, the Freemasons of Masonic Brotherly Lodge hosted a quiz night to raise funds for local charities. Held at the brand new Café Coffee in Costa Lotta, the event brought together members of the local community for an evening of fun and intellectual challenge.

Quiz Master Bob Jones curated a series of thought-provoking questions on such diverse topics as Football, Spain and the Year 2023. Participants were able to show off their knowledge and, after an intense competition, the “In last place” team emerged victorious.

John Smith, the Master of Masonic Brotherly Lodge, took centre stage to congratulate the winners and to present them with prizes of wine. John said, “I want to thank everyone who has come along tonight and for the generosity you have shown in contributing to our charitable causes”.

“Tonight,” John added, “we have raised an impressive €170 for important causes within our local community. I will make sure that your kind donation directly supports those in the greatest need.”

ENDS

Notes for Editors

Freemasons in Costa Lotta

The Freemasons of Masonic Brothers Lodge are part of the World’s largest non-religious fraternal organisation. The Lodge meets regularly in Costa Lotta and is committed to community service, fostering friendship and fellowship amongst its members and raising funds for local charities.

For further information please contact

Jim Johnson, Secretary of Masonic Brothers Lodge No 999 on sec999@glpválencia.com, Tel: 123 456 789

David Clarke, Communications Officer of Provincial Grand Lodge of Valencia on prensa@glpvalencia.com