

I. GENERAL PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

Public relations is defined by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.” Writers in this field inform and persuade the public through newspapers, radio, television and the web, and they also share information internally with an organization’s employees. Often, a PR campaign can be developed around a particular ad or for a specific occasion such as the Super Bowl. Celebrities and business owners utilize public relations to handle media requests, or they may use PR to create and manage their public identities.

People in public relations should be skilled at writing, problem solving and decision-making, have good research skills, and be able to work collaboratively. They should communicate clearly, be creative, take initiative, use good judgment, and have self-confidence. They should also be adept at public speaking, as they often serve as spokespeople for their company or organization. They must be outgoing, participate in interviews, and attend conferences, exhibitions, trade shows and press launches. They may write to persuade, inspire, convince, inform, decide or evaluate as they utilize multi-media technologies such as TV, radio, newspapers, web sources and digital media. They organize news conferences, issue press releases, produce company newsletters, and serve as liaisons between media and their employer.

Jobs in public relations cover a wide range of fields, including sports, employee relations, finance, speech writing, politics, retail business, travel and tourism, and health care, among many other fields. Understanding **audience** is a key factor for writers in public relations.

II. TYPES OF WRITING

- **Press advisory:** pre-press conference information; details to entice, create interest in an event, product, etc.
- **Press release:** post-event summary with detail, such as contact info, potential story lines, etc.
- **News release:** focuses on the “news” aspect of a communication
- **Pitch letter:** attempt to get coverage (story idea, not event); short, provocative selling of an idea
- **Backgrounder:** summary of mission, goals, history, or issue
- **Op-ed:** opinion, position paper, editorial
- **Letter to the editor:** short opinion piece
- **Fact sheet:** numbers, stats, facts (summary)
- **Press kit:** FAQs, photos, graphs, brochures, or bios that provide specific information about an event
- **Talking points:** list of points to make
- **Statement:** direct quote

III. TYPES OF EVIDENCE

- Primary sources (interviews, observations, surveys)
- Secondary sources (books, newspapers, magazines, biographies)
- Charts, graphs, maps, videos, brochures
- Quantitative data (facts, statistics, numbers)
- Multi-media presentations
- In-house research
- Analysis of the competition
- Focus group data

IV. WRITING CONVENTIONS

- Follow AP (Associated Press) style guidelines.
- Use the inverted pyramid when writing for news outlets.
 - Most newsworthy facts
 - Story
 - Supporting details
- Avoid passive voice whenever possible.
- Be honest and fair and don't mislead people.
- Provide claims and support the claims with evidence.
- Write the way people think; a down-to-earth approach works best.
- Before writing, do research that will show why people buy a product or service.
- Ad copy should be clear, concise, to the point; avoid jargon and hype.

V. COMMON TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America)
- Networking
- Publics: audiences to reach
- Earned media: media coverage earned through publicity and promotional events

VI. CITATION STYLE

- **Associated Press (AP)** style is most common.
- Individual professors may require **American Psychological Association (APA)** or **Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)**. Always ask the professor which style is preferred.