

Guide & Tips: Writing media information

The most important thing to keep in mind when starting to write information for the media are the so-called **5 Ws and How**.

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?

Overview – Pay attention to the following ground rules when writing for the media:

- Utilize your impressions and experience as a newspaper reader and then use the style of an article as orientation in order to cut right to the chase of the matter.
- The content should contain all of the **5 Ws and How**.
- Titles in the media should be short and concise (like: »Media Studies in Weimar Defend Top Spot in CHE Ranking«)
- Get to the point! You can always include details later if necessary or interesting. These days there is a flood of communication and journalists who come across your media information want to be able to quickly ascertain what it's all about. Your writing should not exceed a page (DIN-A4 format).
- Work objectively and logically based on provable facts. Declarations of intent and linguistic frills will not help inform your readers.

Basic principle: When possible, compile your information so that it is easy for the media to process it. Make sure to include contact information for any possible queries, and ensure that this contact person is available for 2 to 3 days after the release. It is also advantageous to offer photos with a clear visual message. (For more information, see points »7. Contact and key information« and »10. Images in media information«).

1. The language of media information

Use language that is understandable for the general public, since media information is intended for journalists who have to familiarize themselves with each new topic. Particularly for the technical subjects there are many terms, which would be incomprehensible for a lay person. The use of jargon is discouraged in general. Avoid using fillers and have a layperson read through your (technical) work to make sure it is comprehensible. The better your text is adapted to the needs of journalists, the less it will need to be changed. However, the media information you create should arouse the interest of the editors and not make their work obsolete.

Use straightforward statements, very complex sentences have no place in media information. Whenever possible, replace nouns with verbs and use active instead of passive formulations. In other words, instead of saying "Due to the deterioration of the road surfaces a restoration is required", try "We are restoring the road surfaces since their condition has worsened." Make sure to describe examples and applications in order to ensure that your message is clear and dynamic.

2. How important is your news?

If you are globally active, then your message should be interesting for a large part of the world. National, regional or local news are only important in their field of origin. Local and regional media information is normally directed at the population in the immediate vicinity. Local here means city-level, while regional news refers to state-level.

For instance, if you would like to report about the results of an exhibition from the first semester, then this information does not need to be disseminated nationwide. Furthermore, this information is not relevant for all media (especially the individual specialist media). So think carefully about which group of recipients should receive your message. In coordination with the University Communications, your media information will be placed into one of the following categories or subject areas and then be disseminated via the appropriate distributor:

- Architecture and Urban Planning
- Civil Engineering
- Ecology and Climate Protection
- Art and Design
- Information- and Communication Technology
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Media Design: Film, TV, Radio, Online
- Bauhaus: Past and Present
- Interdisciplinary
- University Facilities
- Projects
- Research
- Degree and Continuing Education
- Research and Higher Education Policy
- Personalia
- Publications
- Exhibitions
- Events
- Regional
- Other

3. How much of what?

The rule of thumb is **one topic per media information** and one statement per sentence. The rule at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar is that no more than three releases are sent per day. So it is a good idea to talk to us in advance about the release of your media information and don't forget to allow time for the potential correction cycle.

4. The title

The title must set your media information apart from the crowd. It should be meaningful, concise and interesting like a headline. Avoid using jargon and titles such as "Media Information" or "Contract signed". Make sure that all of the fundamental information is included in the title – the teaser is always read after the title. If you have a poorly written title, then the reader will never get to the teaser. It is advantageous to include the complete and correct name of the institution in the title ("Bauhaus-Universität Weimar"). Titles in the form of a question are often automatically rejected by journalists since media information should answer questions and not ask them.

So keep titles short and understandable. Do not include any academic titles or abbreviations since many articles are sent per e-mail, whereby only the subject is seen which is usually only 50 characters long.

It also makes sense to break up and structure the release by using subheadings. These should be concise and to the point.

5. The teaser for your media information

The first paragraph should include the **5 Ws and How**. Articles that are too long are always trimmed from the bottom. So simplify the editor's job and make sure that the most important information is included at the beginning of your media information. So make the **5 Ws and How** the focus of your first paragraph.

6. The content of your media information

Media releases should only include precise, newsworthy and truthful information. Avoid all use of hyperbole and platitudes of any kind.

Also avoid boring lists of facts. A good way of counteracting this is by using concise quotes, embedding the fact into the overall context and incorporating comparisons.

7. Contact and key information

For all potential queries and requests for further technical information, you should list a contact person and the relevant contact information at the end of your media information.

You should also be sure to include the following:

- Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
- Contact person or the media relations officer and publicist (if agreed upon)
- Address (street, city, etc.)
- Telephone number
- e-mail address
- Internet address of the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar; additional addresses if necessary

At least one contact person should be available after information for the media has been published, so that questions can be answered during the 2 to 3 days after the information has been dispatched.

It is recommended to use a backgrounder that includes all of the most important facts and background information about your institute/project.

If the release is about an event, then the following key information should be included at the end of the announcement.

Example:

Vernissage:

May 28, 2013 at 8 p.m.

Duration of the exhibition:

May 29 to July 15, 2013

Exhibition location:

Universitätsgalerie marke.6

Neues Museum

Weimarplatz 5

99423 Weimar

www.markepunktsechs.de

8. Deadlines – Dates and how to report them

All of your dates should be given to the media in a timely manner. Allow for about 10 days for daily media so that there is enough of a buffer to edit the announcement. For instance if journalists from the nationwide specialist media are to be invited to an event, the date should be released at least three months in advance. Regional media are usually more flexible than specialist media, especially monthly and quarterly specialist magazines.

Invitations, which the editorial staff receive just a few hours before an event will be ignored, unless it is regarding an unexpected, significant event and the relevance is correspondingly high.

Please be aware that your notification will be subjected to a correction and approval cycle within the University Communications department. Please let us know in advance when you intend to submit any media information so that we can agree upon reliable time-line. Please allow for two to three days for the correction cycle within our department. There is an exigency plan for breaking news.

9. The appearance of your media information

The point is not to make your release look *pretty*. The goal is to facilitate readability. Clear and simple presentation of the writing also allows for quicker error detection during proof-reading (check for word duplication and typos, etc.). Do not use asterisk lines (*****) or dash lines (_____) to "beautify" your text. This can cause undesired formatting issues when releases are sent per e-mail.

Furthermore media information should contain only pure text and not include any HTML formatting.

10. Images in media information

If you are able to supply images (including user rights), then you should offer this to the editorial staff. This increases not only the chances of your work being published but also makes the release more interesting for future readers. Do not send these via e-mail. Instead send a link to your image's location so that it can be downloaded.

Images should be available in the following formats:

- JPEG/JPG
- PNG
- GIF
- TIFF

We recommend the JPEG/JPG format. Each release requires a web version and a print version, therefore the images should be available in two sizes. One with about 1000 pixels (lengths) and the other one with a length of about 3000 pixels.

11. Multilingual

Certain publications and relevant content will be translated into English in order to strengthen the advisory service for students and potential students in accordance with the international profile of the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. If you would like to have your information for the media translated, then please fill out the request form that can be found on the University Communications website: www.uni-weimar.de/uk.

If you have any further questions about writing for the media, please do not hesitate to contact the University Communications and/or the press and public relations staff in each of the faculties!

Contact:

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
Claudia Weinreich
Press Officer
phone: 036 43 / 58 11 73
e-mail: presse@uni-weimar.de

Romy Weinhold
Faculty of Art and Design
Press and Public Relations
phone: 036 43 / 58 11 86
e-mail: romy.weinhold@uni-weimar.de

Gabriela Oroz
Faculty of Architecture and Urban Studies
Marketing Manager
phone: 036 43 / 58 31 15
e-mail: gabriela.oroz@uni-weimar.de

Tina Meinhardt
Faculty of Media
Press and Public Relations
phone: 036 43 / 58 37 06
e-mail: tina.meinhardt@uni-weimar.de

Dana Höftmann
Faculty of Civil Engineering
Press and Public Relations
phone: 036 43 / 58 11 93
e-mail: dana.hoeftmann@uni-weimar.de

In urgent cases:
Yvonne Puschatzki
Head of the University Communications
phone: 036 43 / 58 11 70
e-mail: yvonne.puschatzki@uni-weimar.de