Press Release Headline Worksheet

A practical worksheet for turning a vague announcement into a clear, journalist-friendly headline.

Use this before you write the release. The goal is not to make the headline clever. The goal is to make the news easy to understand.

1. Core Announcement Snapshot	
Company / organization	Write the official name exactly as it should appear.
What happened?	Launch, expansion, funding, partnership, new hire, research, award, event, milestone, etc.
Who is affected?	Customers, local community, industry, employees, investors, nonprofits, authors, patients, etc.
Why now?	Timing, trend, deadline, season, problem being solved, or market shift.
Proof point	Number, location, customer count, percentage, dollar amount, years in business, or other specific evidence.
Most relevant beat	Local business, trade, technology, healthcare, nonprofit, books, education, finance, etc.

Quick rule: *If the announcement cannot be explained here, the headline is not ready yet.*

Build the Headline Ingredients

Start with the facts. Then choose the strongest pieces. You may not use every detail in the headline. That is fine. The subheadline can carry supporting context.

2. Choose the News Angle	
Main angle	What is the real story here?
Reader benefit	Why should the audience care?
Local / industry hook	Is there a city, region, market, or trade angle?
What makes this timely?	Date, trend, season, new data, launch window, or public need.

3. Pick Strong Headline Words	
Specific nouns	Examples: tutoring center, cybersecurity platform, grant program, research report.
Plain verbs	Examples: launches, opens, expands, raises, appoints, releases, partners, publishes.
Avoid hype	Cross out words like revolutionary, game-changing, best-in-class, cutting-edge, disruptive.
Keep / remove	List the words that must stay - and the words you can cut.

Headline formula
Company or organization + action + specific news + audience or context

Your working formula
Example: BrightPath + opens + Raleigh tutoring center + for middle school math students

Draft Three Headline Options

Do not stop at the first version. Write three. One should be plain and factual. One should add audience context. One should use your strongest proof point.

Draft	Headline option	Chars	What works / what to fix
1. Factual version			
2. Audience/context version			
3. Proof-point version			

4. Headline Quality Check	
☐	A stranger can understand what happened without reading the release.
☐	The main news appears near the front of the headline.
☐	The headline avoids sales language, hype, and exclamation points.
☐	The company name, product name, and location are accurate.
☐	The headline fits a real reporter beat or audience interest.
☐	The wording is short enough to scan quickly.
☐	The headline could be copied into a news brief without sounding like an ad.

Tip: *The best headline often appears after you remove five words.*

Finalize the Headline and Subheadline

Use the headline for the main news. Use the subheadline only when you need extra proof, timing, geography, or context.

Final headline

Write the clearest version here.

Optional subheadline

Add the missing context: proof point, trend, timing, location, or audience.

5. Final Scorecard

☐	Clear over clever.
☐	Specific over broad.
☐	News over promotion.
☐	Plain English over jargon.
☐	One main idea, not three ideas stitched together.
☐	Subheadline used for support, not clutter.

Example rewrite

Weak: Innovative Company Revolutionizes Learning

Stronger: Local Robotics Startup Launches Classroom Kit to Help Middle Schools Teach Coding

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