



## Guide to Writing a Hometown Press Release

Media coverage of Walk to Action not only helps to raise awareness about child abuse prevention and the Walk, it can also help you with your fundraising! If you have never talked to the press before, pitching your story to a news outlet may seem like a daunting task, but it's not a complicated thing to do. We've created this step-by-step guide to help you write a concise, well-structured press release.

Journalists are bombarded with faxes, e-mails and letters containing an incredible number of worthy stories. Your goal is to capture their attention in the first 10 words and to realize that good stories sometimes need an assertive little nudge to get on the air or into print. So whether your pitch is on paper, via e-mail or in person, we suggest that you take some time to create an effective strategy.

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### Step 1. Know Your Facts

On the Walk to Action website, [www.walktoaction.org](http://www.walktoaction.org), are materials to help you create a complete and accurate overview of the event and of the current state of child abuse prevention in the United States. We do not suggest that you list every fact in your press release; rather, pull out one or two that speak to you. When you talk about the Walk, make sure you state how far you are walking (20 miles) and how much money you intend to raise. This is not a stroll around the block, it is a commitment of your time and energy; people should have the opportunity to witness your dedication.

In the "Press Room" section of [www.walktoaction.org](http://www.walktoaction.org) is a press release template that you can use to get started.

### Step 2. Create Your Pitch

Why will this story interest the audience? What is the "news angle?" Make sure you mention why you are walking; that personal angle is often the "hook" for the story that the writer needs. The first person you have to sell your story idea to is the journalist and he or she is primarily interested in generating stories that sell papers or attract viewers. **Remember, the first 10 words need to capture their attention; the rest just needs to hold it.**

Whenever appropriate, identify yourself as part of the audience or community—maybe this is going to your alumnae newsletter or the local paper you've been reading for the last 10 years. Are you the community little league coach or neighborhood dentist? Include your relationship to the audience in your press release.

### Step 3. Include the Six Tenets of Journalism

Your press release or letter should answer the six basic tenets of journalism.

- **WHO** are you? Are you a butcher, baker or cabinetmaker? A couple of sentences about who you are (especially ones that establish your link to the audience) are imperative.

- **WHAT** are you doing? Walk to Action is a good bet.
- **WHEN** is it happening? Although the event is scheduled for November 7<sup>th</sup>, your goal is to raise funds and you are doing that right NOW. Establishing an immediacy of action will help get your story told. “NOW” is newsworthy, so establishing present action is a good idea. Are you holding a fundraiser in two weeks? Want to invite a journalist along for your first 12-mile training walk? Come up with a compelling reason why your story should be covered now. If you need ideas, remember you can always call Blake at the Walk office.
- **WHY** are you walking? For your nephew? Your friend? Yourself? Are you walking because you’ve learned how pervasive and preventable child abuse is and you want make a difference? What is your motivation? Is it a person you know or the image of someone you do not know that you are trying to help? The facts outlined above will add statistical validity to your release, but only you can create the image, the face, the story.
- **WHERE** is this occurring? You should definitely state that Walk to Action is traveling 20 miles to Alamo Plaza. However, if you are hosting a fundraising event of your own – maybe a friend owns a hair salon and has agreed to donate all the proceeds from haircuts between 1:00 and 5:00 on Saturday to your fundraising effort – you need to let people know when and where to go!
- **HOW** can the readership or audience help? They can make an on-line donation directly to your Walker account at [www.walktoaction.org/donate](http://www.walktoaction.org/donate). (You should mention your Walker number.) As an additional resource and to learn more, please include Walk to Action contact information:

**Web sites:**

[www.walktoaction.org](http://www.walktoaction.org)  
[www.preventchildabusetexas.org](http://www.preventchildabusetexas.org)

**E-mail:**

[bstrasser@globalimpactpro.com](mailto:bstrasser@globalimpactpro.com)

**Addresses and Phone Numbers:**

Walk to Action  
 c/o Global Impact Productions  
 127 West 26th Street, Suite 402  
 New York, NY 10001  
 Phone: 868.858.6877  
 Fax: 212.807.1853

Prevent Child Abuse Texas  
 13740 Research Boulevard, Suite R-4  
 Austin, TX 78750-1835  
 Phone: 512.250.8438  
 Fax: 512.250.8733

**Step 4. Scroll and Send.**

Start scrolling through your rolodex and then head to the internet. In a perfect world, you are on friendly terms with a few journalists and can hand them your story over lunch; warm leads are always more effective than cold calls. Most people aren’t so lucky, but don’t let that stop you. In lieu of a personal connection (and in addition to them), the internet is a great resource. Most news outlets have a general e-mail address where you can send story ideas. This is a fast, inexpensive way to distribute your pitch. Nowadays, many local papers feature blogs by their popular writers who are always looking for a good story. If you’re more comfortable with snail mail or faxes, those methods have worked for many years, too, so send away!

## Step 5. Follow Up

Getting your story published or on-air is not a tennis match. Sending out a letter and waiting for the press to call you back is probably not going to work. The ball is still in your court. You are going to have to take the initiative, pick up the phone, and follow-up. Remember, journalists (especially ones with larger audiences) are besieged with story ideas and a quick phone call can help keep your pitch alive and at the top of the heap. If the answer is no, move on and remember that if you don't ask, the answer is always no. You have to give each outlet the opportunity to say "yes" by following up. Keep the faith and keep trying.

## Step 6. LET US KNOW!

When you do get your story published, please send us a copy of your piece and we'll post it on the Walk site! If there was something in particular that contributed to your success, let us know so that we can pass that information on to other walkers.

We would like to be involved with stories that are picked up by larger media outlets in order to support your story. If a major outlet is doing a piece about your story, please contact:

Blake Strasser, Walker Coach  
[bstrasser@globalimpactpro.com](mailto:bstrasser@globalimpactpro.com)  
866.858.6877 x12

**Generating media interest is not easy, but it is a tremendously powerful educational, marketing and fundraising tool. If you have a good story to tell, we encourage you to pitch it to the media. GOOD LUCK!**