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Your Role as Publicity Chairman of A Home Demonstration Club

June Cline*

You have been named the publicity chairman of your home demonstration club. It is an important role. In fact, much of the club's success depends on how well you do your job.

You may be wondering just what your job involves. You will be telling your community about the club — what it has done, what it is doing and what it is going to do. How do you go about informing the community? By any means you can think of — newspapers, radio, television, posters and bulletin board announcements.

Newspapers

Large, metropolitan papers usually limit club news to announcement-type stories of club meetings. Small town weekly newspapers may be willing to print more details. Each newspaper may have a different policy.

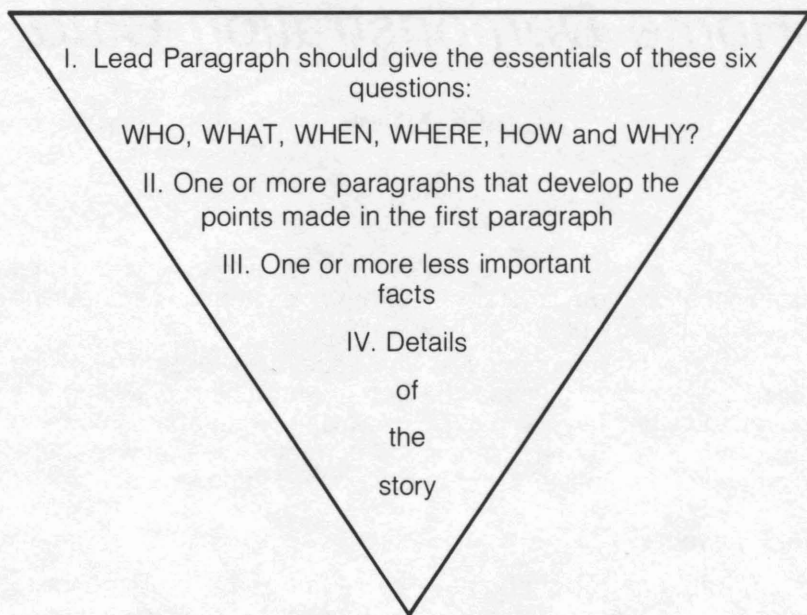
It is important for you to visit the newspaper office before you write a story. Ask a staff member for pointers. Study stories in the paper to determine the kind of stories the paper wants. Perhaps your county could organize a training session, arranging for an editor to speak to several publicity chairmen at one time.

News is timely information about unusual and important happenings. You will write about unusual and important things that club members are doing. Your story must tell what the activity is, who did or will do it, why and when. Keep your stories as simple as you can and still get the idea across. Pretend you are writing to a friend. Ask yourself what you would tell her; in what order; and how much she would want to know.

*Extension organization specialist, The Texas A&M University System.

Writing a news story is not difficult if you organize your thoughts before you begin. Usually, the first paragraph — called the “lead” in newspaper lingo — should tell the reader who, what, when, where and why. If you cannot include all these elements in the lead, be sure to include them somewhere in the story.

What comes next? The most important details can be followed by miscellaneous information. Rank paragraphs in the order of importance — the most important first, the second most important second, and so on. Journalists call this the inverted pyramid style.



A, B, C's of Good Writing

Make it Accurate.

Make it Brief.

Make it Clear.

The most important details of your meeting is usually the program. You might begin by writing:

Members of the Winning Ways Home Demonstration Club discovered the versatility of blender cookery at their meeting June 3. Mrs. Maxwell Taylor, program leader, prepared a variety of blender foods at the home of Miss Ann South. A tasting bee followed the program.

After such a lead, add a paragraph or two about the program. Details such as who served refreshments or who gave the entertainment belong toward the end of the story.

The key word is short — short words, short sentences, short paragraphs. Try to write sentences that have fewer than 20 words.

Two or three sentences make a good paragraph in a news story. Make each paragraph a complete thought, using no more than 40 or 50 words.

If the editor cuts part of your story, do not be disappointed. Often the editor has to cut a story to make it fit available space.

The newspaper editor is more likely to print the story if you:

- Type the story, double or triple spaced, on white, 8½-x 11-inch paper. Write the name of the club and your name and telephone number in the left hand corner of the page. Write "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" in the right hand corner. If you must stipulate a later release time, write "RELEASE AFTER" and add the specific time and date.
- Use only one side of the paper. If your story must run more than one page, write "More" at the bottom of the first page. End each page with a complete sentence and paragraph. At the end of your story type ###.
- Write the story in third person. Write "The members decided" rather than "We decided."
- Be sure all names are spelled correctly and dates and times are accurate.
- When giving a married woman's name, find out if she prefers "Mrs. Harry Jones" or "Mrs. Sue Jones." If a woman is unmarried, refer to her as "Miss Sue Jones." If her name is mentioned a second time, leave out her first name and refer to her as Mrs. Jones or Miss Jones.
- Submit the story before the club or event if it is possible. If you must wait until the event is over, be sure the newspaper gets the story by the following day. Late follow-up stories lose their reader appeal. No paper likes to print stale news. Ask your editor about specific deadlines.

To make the newspaper, a home demonstration event must be one or more of the following: recent, important, close to the place of publication, unusual or interesting. The writeup always must be accurate.

Air Publicity

Announcements for radio and television are written much the same as news releases. They tell the audience who, what, when, where and why. And they do it briefly and accurately. It is wise to check with the program director of the station to see how you should prepare a release.

If your club has an outstanding story — a well-known guest speaker comes to your meeting — the radio or television station may want to interview the speaker and one of your members. Keep thinking of ideas and let the program director know about them.

Posters

Window posters help publicize a special event — and your club, too. Be sure the posters you display are well-done. Attractive posters will promote your club's image, but carelessly done posters say bad things in your behalf.

Remove posters as soon as the event is over. Out-of-date, tattered posters do not speak well for your group.

When it is Over

Your job is not done when the event is over. Clip newspaper releases and place them in your club scrapbook. Now is the time to evaluate your efforts. Make a few notes about publicity that worked well and publicity that did not — and why. Even brief notes will make the next publicity campaign easier and more effective.

Remember the importance of "thank you" to people who helped — the newspaper editor, the program director at the radio station, the poster makers. A few notes of thanks now will pay off when you publicize the next event. A special note of appreciation at the end of the year will make your successor's job much easier, too.

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