



# How to Make Your News Releases 47% More Usable: Tips from Writing Coach Ann Wylie



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# Introduction

In a world with an abundance of nonstop news, and with multiple forms of media, it's understandable that a majority of people do not read articles word for word – in fact, [only 19% read every word](#).

This presents a challenge to communicators. What is the best way to share your organization's news and ensure message comprehension if the majority of your audiences merely skim articles?

Award-winning writing coach [Ann Wylie](#) of [Wylie Communications](#) shares techniques to optimize the formatting of your news to reach readers as they're viewing your content. By implementing these tools, you'll catch the eyes of skimmers and scanners, ensuring they understand the news you are trying to convey – instantly.



**Ann Wylie**

Writing Coach and CEO  
Wylie Communications

## In this guide, you'll learn how to make your press releases more reader-friendly, including:

- Using formatting to make your press release 47% more readable
- Creating effective bulleted lists
- Maximizing clickable and visual elements to catch nonreaders' eyes
- Driving message adoption with a better news display, catching the attention of casual readers



# Pull Your Readers in with the Skim Test

Casual readers may not read every word you write, but revising the format of your press release to increase readability will help drive message adoption of your main points.

**Does your news pass Ann's Skim Test?** If the gist of your announcement is clear without reading every single word, it passes.

We know most readers will not read word for word. Additionally, we know there are common patterns readers' eyes tend to follow as they scan information online.

**People are busy**, and there is an abundance of information available 24/7. So while you'd love to have someone read your press release in full, realistically, their eyes are bouncing from the headline, first couple of sentences, down the left, maybe picking out a few sentences in the middle, then quickly scanning to the end.

When outlining your next press release, list the major ideas you want readers to take away and format these within display copy so they stand out.

Simply by formatting your news as display copy, you instantly emphasize your key messages, creating a visual path for skimmers to follow. Viewers' eyes will naturally gravitate to a headline, then subhead, on to a bulleted list with bolded first words, etc.



**Write a powerful headline. Use strong verbs, be concise, and share key information.**

# Utilizing Display Copy

Display copy is any copy that lifts your main ideas off the page: headline, deck copy, subheads, lists, captions, callouts, bold-faced lead-ins, and highlighted key words.

Placing your main messages within these display elements helps your release pass the Skim Test.

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## Headline

### ABC Corp. Launches State-of-the-Art Product

Deck Copy

Product provides the public with new platform allowing easier access and streamlined process



**Caption**

New ABC Corp. platform is available on desktop and mobile.

August 08, 2022 10:30 AM Eastern Standard Time

**Highlighted key words**

CHICAGO, IL. --(BUSINESS WIRE)--ABC Corp. (NYSE: ABC) launched its new platform to the public today, making it easier and more streamlined for users to instantly access materials with the touch of a button. This platform adds to ABC Corp.'s portfolio of solutions successfully delivered over the last year.

**Callout**

"Our new platform allows the public to search, compare, trade and purchase what they are looking for in mere minutes and at low costs."

Tweet this

**Bold-faced lead-ins**

ABC Corp.'s platform includes:

- **Easy search functions** for users to quickly find what products they desire.
- **Comparison features** to view products side by side.
- **Visual elements** so users can see and interact with products before purchasing.
- **Saving capability** to save and revisit searches.

**List**


**An Eye on New Technology**

ABC Corp. has kept sharp focus on **emerging technology** in order to streamline their products and services, as well as to provide a seamless experience for customers. The new platform incorporated two new software enhancements and three upgrades from prior similar platforms.

**Subhead**

**About ABC Corp.**

ABC Corp. is a proven and trusted provider of resources for the public. Founded in 2016, the company has grown quickly to a global player. Focused on customer service and reliable delivery of materials, ABC Corp. continues to be a top company.



ABC CORP.  
NYSE: ABC

- **Headquarters:** Chicago, IL
- **Website:** [www.abc.com](http://www.abc.com)
- **CEO:** John Smith
- **Employees:** 5,600
- **Organization:** PUB

### Release Summary

ABC Corp., a trusted provider, announces the launch of its new easy-to-use, streamlined platform, adding to ABC Corp.'s lineup of successful solutions.

### #Hashtags

#ABCCorp #SolutionsForYou  
#technology #software

### Social Media Profiles

ABC Corp. on Facebook  
ABC Corp. on Twitter  
ABC Corp. on LinkedIn

### Release Versions

English French Spanish  
German Chinese Simplified  
Chinese Traditional

### More News

### Contacts

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# Make it Easy for Readers with the Palm Test

Think about the sheer amount of news you encounter each day. From visiting websites to seeing articles posted on social media, to ads that appear while you browse, plus print newspapers and news magazines delivered to your business or home – there’s an abundance of materials to read each day.

Give readers a rest by making your news appear easier to read. A wall of words overwhelms people. They’ll skip your news if they think the effort to read your story is not worth the outcome. **By breaking up your text with formatting and incorporating multimedia, you reduce the impression of how much commitment is needed to read and understand your news.**

Ann’s Palm Test can help with this.

If you place your palm over your press release, what is covered? If your hand is covering all text, you’re limiting the potential consumption of your release; your news will only appeal to text-only readers.

Instead, **your palm – wherever it is placed – should cover a mix of subheadlines, bulleted lists, bolded copy, and visuals, revealing easily consumable content.** These visible elements showcase variety on the page, especially the important terms, topics and ideas – so readers can more clearly digest your news.

Consider the positive effects of multimedia. Take the opportunity to illustrate your news if you haven’t already been doing so. **Showing your story, not just telling it, provides your audience with alternative ways to enter your story and learn more about your news.**



As the world moves to visual communications, photos, videos, infographics, and other multimedia not only help attract the eye of your reader, but they also help tell your story.



**Business Wire encourages adding multimedia to your news releases. Journalists and reporters want visuals. Photos, videos, and other imagery help tell your story to a wider audience.**

# Adding Magnetic Elements to Your Press Release

Ann recommends incorporating the following essential elements into your press releases to maximize the readability and comprehension of your news.

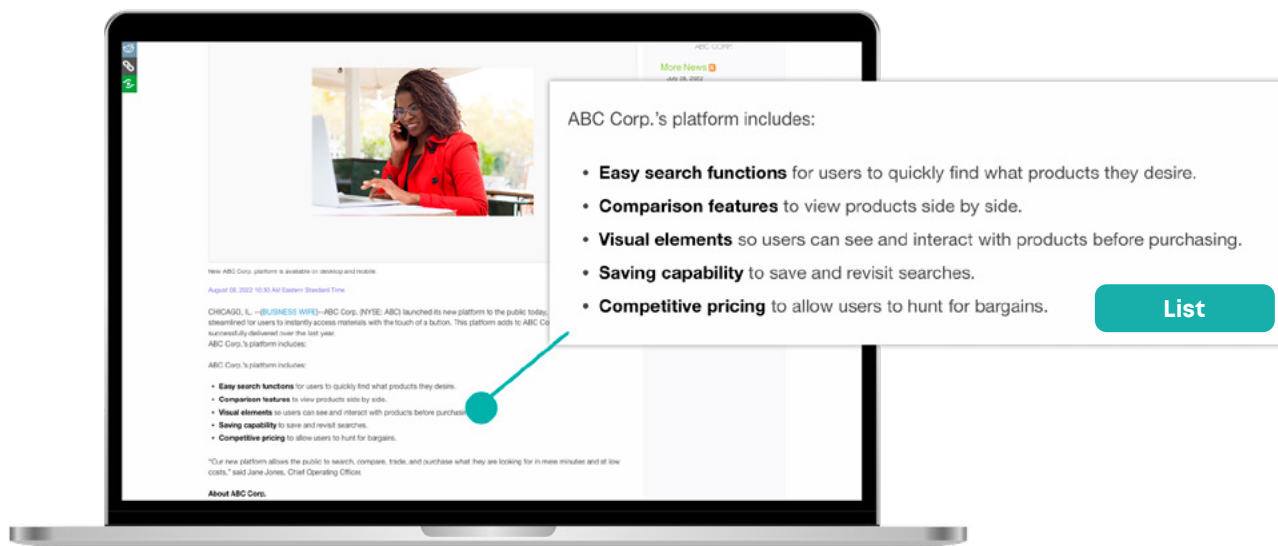


**Business Wire's exclusive NX platform retains your release's formatting, delivering reporters easily readable press releases with bold or italic text, bulleted lists, tables, and more.**

## Lists

Ann said it best: "Lists are to the web reader's eye as what Brad Pitt is to paparazzi." People look at 70% of bulleted lists they encounter. Lists draw attention and help break up dense text.

- **Provide context** by introducing your list with text.
- **Include three items or more** in your list series.
- **Keep bullet points** vs. showing a list without bullets. Only 55% of readers look at a list without bullet points.
- **Bold words in your bulleted list** to emphasize your main points. This will attract the eyes of readers who scan, piquing their interest.
- **Use verbs** in your list to make it easily skimmable.



## Captions

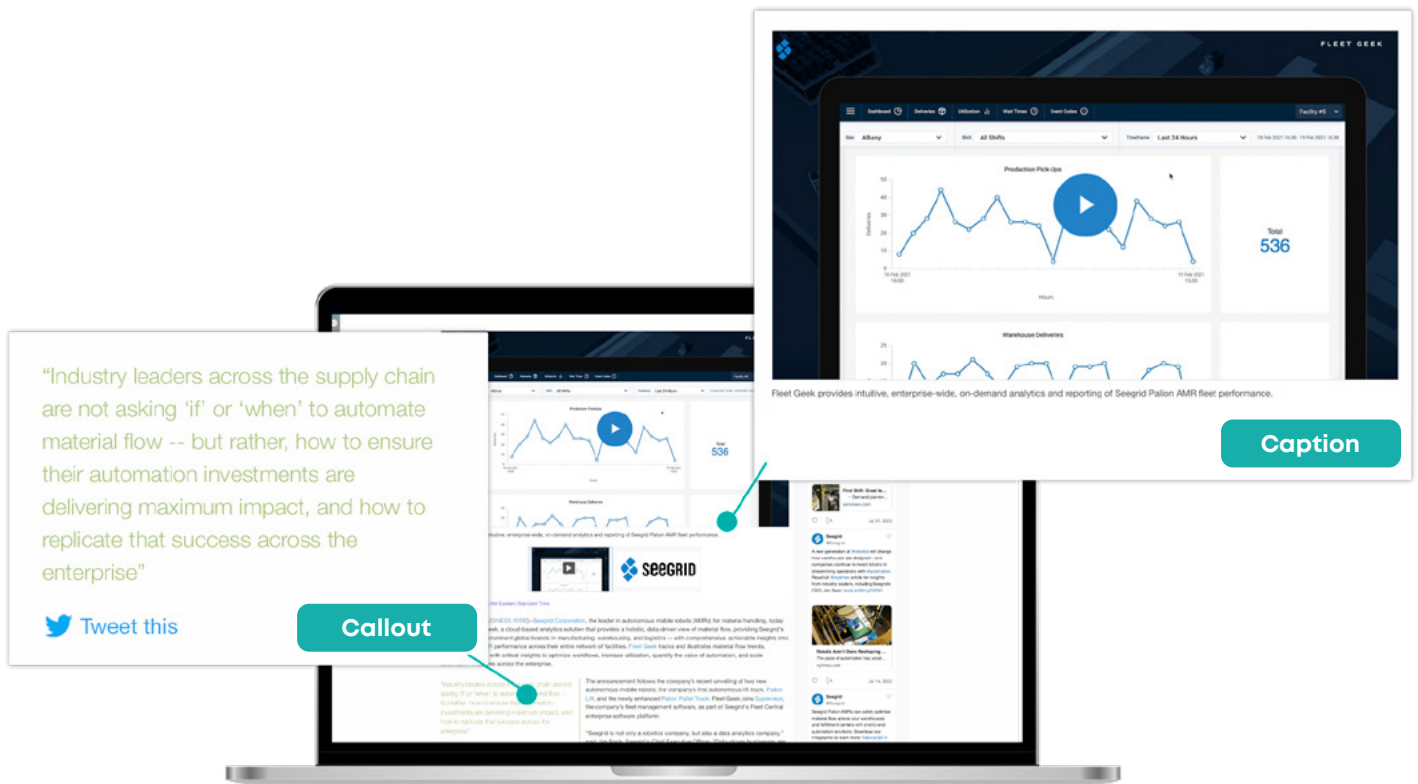
Another magnetic element to help draw reader attention and instantly increase story comprehension are multimedia captions. Take full advantage of this space and tell your story; don't simply describe the image.

- ➔ Explain the power of the visual – why your news matters.
- ➔ Add a catchline that introduces the visual.
- ➔ Keep the description simple and understandable.
- ➔ Bring your reader into your narrative.
- ➔ Explain what you want viewers and readers to take away from your news.

## Callouts

Including callout boxes or callout features like quotes in your press release draws eyes to specific supporting information that helps catch reader attention.

Business Wire's pull quotes or "Tweet this" feature acts as a callout. This helps break up your release text online but also allows readers the ability to quickly tweet your release. When considering what text to use as a pull quote, Ann advises thinking about it like a movie trailer: concisely share the most compelling and engaging information.





## Summaries

As part of your press release, write a summary that provides an at-a-glance overview of your key takeaways. Focus on the benefits for your reader instead of the benefits for your organization.

News releases distributed with Business Wire include a release summary at the top right of your published release. Use this feature to entice readers to read your full release and increase the comprehension of your announcement among skimmers.

## Links

Links and other clickable elements make up nearly half of all “eye stops” in online content. Ann has these recommendations for incorporating links in your release.

- ➔ **Avoid generic links that say “Click here” or “Read more.”** These are skipped by casual readers (meaning fewer clicks!) and reduce accessibility.
- ➔ **Links should be able to stand on their own.** Embed your link in text that reiterates your story and explains what will be viewed when clicked.
- ➔ **Consider how you word your links and keep them concise.** Ann shares this example: instead of *How professional chefs cook squash*, reformat your link text to *Cook squash like a pro*. This explains enough to skimmers so they understand the topic of your release.



Ann reminds us that across all industries, everyone reading your news is human and will likely skim or scan your release. Using Ann's formatting tips and taking advantage of built-in features of Business Wire releases, you can optimize your news for casual readers. This will help you catch skimmer and scanner eyes, ultimately improving message adoption of your news.

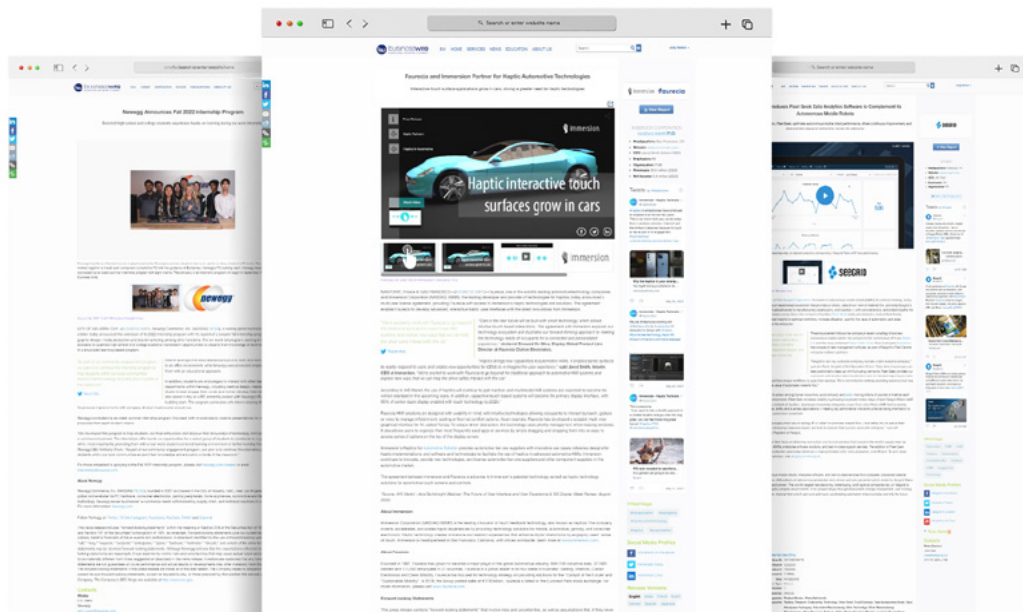
## About Ann Wylie, Wylie Communications

Award-winning coach Ann Wylie works with communicators who want to reach more readers. And she works with organizations that want to get the word out. Ann has written more than a dozen learning tools. They include Think Like a Reader, Master the Art of Storytelling, and Cut Through the Clutter. She is also the author of Rev Up Readership, a toolbox for writers. Learn more and register for Ann's [upcoming classes](#).

## About Business Wire

Business Wire, a Berkshire Hathaway company, is the global leader in news release distribution and regulatory disclosure. Public relations, investor relations, public policy, and marketing professionals rely on Business Wire for secure and accurate distribution of market-moving news and multimedia.

Founded in 1961, Business Wire is a trusted source for news organizations, journalists, investment professionals, and regulatory authorities, delivering news directly into editorial systems and leading online news sources via its multi-patented NX Network. Business Wire's global newsrooms are available to meet the needs of communications professionals and news media worldwide.



Ensure your story gets heard. If you would like more information on how Business Wire can help your business, please contact us today.

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