

TIPS ON:

Telling a Tale

What makes any story into a good story for the media? Before pitching a story to a news outlet or journalist, here are a few things to think about that will help you plan your pitch, and give you a better chance of getting your ‘story’ out in the media.

A good media story contains the five Ws.

A media story needs to have the Five Ws—who, what, when, where, and why.

A good story may focus on these other Ws.

Glen Dromgoole, editor of the Abilene, Texas, Reporter-News, says there are at least four other Ws to consider:

Worthwhile - Stories that readers find useful, i.e., information that can help them improve their lives.

Wow! - Stories that are out of the ordinary and evoke a “wow” response.

We - Stories that help the audience to connect with their community and to some extent their province, country, and world.

Watch - Media may also be interested in stories that maintain their role as a watchdog and independent observer of others.

A good story matters.

Ask yourself: Why should they care? “We’re looking for stories that appeal to the heart, health, and pocketbook,” said Rob Snow, CFRA. Other media like to appeal to the “head” by offering thought-provoking and analytical stories that take the listener/reader/viewer beyond what they already know.

A good story is interesting.

Be honest about how interesting your “story” would be for others! Think about stories that engage, are provocative or unexpected, or evoke an emotional response.

A good story is simple and to the point.

Use the “focus” technique. You should be able to explain your story in one simple sentence that answers the questions: (a) Who (b) Is Doing What (c) and Why?

A good story is newsworthy.

What’s a newspeg? A newspeg is the selling point for the media and gives them a reason to publish/broadcast that story on a certain day. Some examples are anniversary dates, events (such as Convocation), success stories (e.g., just won an award, published a paper, completed research study.)

A good story is credible.

Relevant and factually correct background information must be included.

A good story is low on ‘promotional content.’

It is important to consider and emphasize your key messages - but don’t overdo it.

A good story is personalized.

You need to target a story pitch to a particular show. Editors and reporters know what appeals to their audiences.

A good story needs a good storyteller.

It’s your story, so make sure they can reach you if they’re interested in telling it. Include your contact information with the pitch / story.

Adaped from Carleton University's [Top ten tips to telling a tale](#)