

# Writing a Press Release

## Activity 4

### Step 1

Decide what message you want to get out to the public. Do you want to publicize a fund-raising or an awareness-raising event? Do you want to talk about what you and your classmates are doing to take action on environmental issues at the school or in your community? Or do you want to state your opinions on an issue such as the problem of water pollution in Canada and around the world?

All of these messages can be conveyed in a press release. This gives you the opportunity to tell a media outlet – like a newspaper or television station – exactly what you are doing or what you think is important.

### Step 2

Decide which media outlet you plan to approach. Will it be the newspaper, radio or television station, or perhaps all three? You may want to write one press release for all three, or tailor each press release for the specific media outlet.

For newspapers, you may want to add photographs to be included with the story or provide examples on what photo opportunities can be set up; with television you can give ideas of what can be filmed to tell the story with pictures (including people who can be interviewed for the television camera); and with radio, you may also include who will be available for radio interviews.

### Step 3

When writing a press release, it's important to keep it short and to the point. It's a good idea to keep it under one page in length. Make sure you include answers to the basic W5 questions: Who? What? Where? When? and Why? You may also want to answer: How? If you are promoting a

fundraiser, the reporter will want to know how you are going to raise money.

Once you have answered those basic questions, include one or two sentences on the background/history of your organization or group. (For example, if you are an environmental club at a school, you can state how long you have been in existence and what your goals are.)

If you are talking about your position on an issue, it may be a good idea to quote a spokesperson from your group or organization. Taking the environmental club as an example, you could have the president quoted in the press release, backing up the position you have taken on the issue.

Always include a phone number of someone from your group or organization who the reporter can contact for more information.

### Step 4

Do your homework before sending a press release. Contact the media outlet and ask to whom the press release should be sent. This will ensure it does not get lost or end up on the wrong person's desk. You can send it by mail, fax or even e-mail (most media outlets are equipped for this).

### Step 5

Once you've sent the press release, you should follow up to the media outlets with a phone call to ensure the release was received and to see if the reporter/editor has any questions. This may be an opportunity to remind them about your cause and encourage them to publish something.

*see sample on page 2*



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### Orchardview Elementary marks Earth Day with Tree Planting; Dr. David Suzuki to speak

On April 22, 1999, the students at Orchardview School in Toronto will join with young people around the world to celebrate Earth Day.

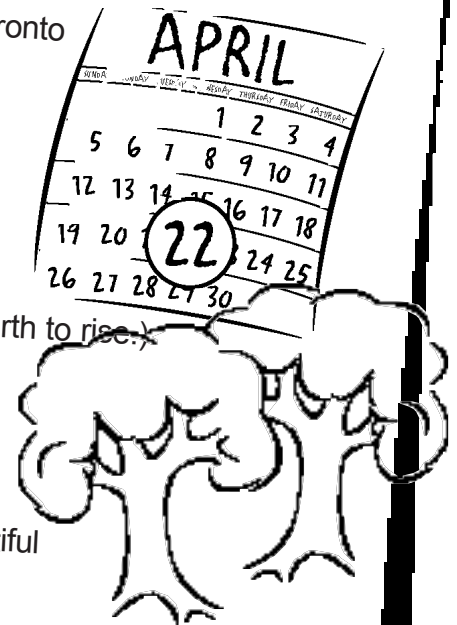
To mark the occasion, students decided the best way to show solidarity for the environment would be through the symbolic planting of an evergreen tree. Students realize, however, that just one tree is not enough to make an impact.

"We all have to do our part for the Earth. If every citizen of Ontario planted one tree, what a difference it could make in improving our soil and air quality," explained Jane Smith, president of the Orchardview Earth Day Committee.

Orchardview is issuing a challenge to all elementary schools in Toronto to plant a tree on April 22.

#### Among vital things that trees provide the environment:

- through the process of photosynthesis, trees return oxygen to the air, which is vital for humans to breathe;
- trees help control carbon dioxide levels in the air. (Increasing levels of carbon dioxide are thought to be causing the temperature of the Earth to rise.)
- tree roots help to secure the soil, allowing it to absorb rain water;
- trees return moisture to the atmosphere, which eventually forms clouds that return the water to Earth;
- and we shouldn't forget, trees provide us with shade and they are beautiful in our gardens and parks.



Aside from planting a tree, the Orchardview Earth Day Committee is organizing a school recycling drive; holding a school-wide poster contest to spread the environment message; and hosting a Earth Day Panel Discussion with special guest, Dr. David Suzuki.

All Earth Day activities are open to the general public, including the panel discussion which begins at 1 p.m. Dr. Suzuki will be available, along with members of the Earth Day committee, to answer questions after the panel.

For more information about Orchardview events, please contact Principal John Row at 555-1234.