

FCCLA Editorial Style Guide

Visit the News & Media section of the FCCLA website to access the full version of the *FCCLA Style Manual*.

“A” or “an” preceding an abbreviation.

When an abbreviation follows an indefinite article, the choice of “a” or “an” is determined by the way the abbreviation would be read aloud.

Acronyms read as words (except when used adjectively) are rarely preceded by a, an, or the (“member nations of NATO”). When each letter of an acronym is read, often they are preceded by an article (“member nations of the EU”).

Note that we do not follow this rule at FCCLA. Even though each letter is read, we say “chapter members of FCCLA” not “chapter members of the FCCLA.”

- an FCCLA chapter
- an HMO
- a UFO
- a PDA
- a CTSO webcast
- a FACS class

FCCLA Terminology

FCCLA programs, scholarships, and awards. All program names should be in roman font, not italicized.

Financial Fitness

Financial Fitness program

STOP the Violence—Students Taking On Prevention

STOP program

Raye Virginia Allen State President’s Scholarship

Families First High School Award

Families First Middle School recipient

Families First Runner-Up winner

FCCLA meetings and activities. Capitalize full, official names of meetings and activities. Lower case derivations or associated titles.

- National Board of Directors Meeting
board meeting
- National Leadership Conference
- National conference

When referring to a group’s meeting, omit the apostrophe. This is because it is a meeting of a group, not a meeting belonging to a group. There is clearly no possessive meaning.

- State Presidents Training
- Newcomers Seminar

Proper style of FCCLA commonly-used terms.

Many words or phrases are acceptable in more than one spelling or format in the English language. For consistency, FCCLA chapters and members at all levels must adhere to the following formats of commonly-used terms:

adviser (FCCLA spells this word with an “er” not “or” at the end)

postsecondary (there is no space or dash between “post” and “secondary”)

co-curricular (FCCLA activities are co-curricular, not extra- or intra-curricular)

website (there is no space between “web” and “site”)

Media

Why Media is Important

Contacting a media person with a public service announcement (PSA), media release, or an idea for a radio talk show or magazine feature can be intimidating. But remember: you are doing the media a service by alerting them to important activities that are happening in the community. As long as you treat them with respect, they will appreciate your ideas and your input.

If you want the media to know your chapter, you must first know the media! Pay attention to radio, television, and newspaper reports. Ask yourself why they're covering what they do and make special note of stories related to FCCLA programs. Look for instances where someone from your chapter could have easily been a resource. If a reporter does a story even remotely related to the issues you cover, send the person a nice note praising the story. Attach a brochure, fact sheet, or one of the program information sheets about FCCLA, available on the FCCLA national website, for future use.

The media can position your chapter as a vital community resource. But don't limit your media outreach to planned events. Be proactive. Get to know reporters and producers who are interested in your chapter activities, and suggest stories to them throughout the year. This helps you elevate the importance of volunteer action! As you develop relationships with media members, make sure they realize that you can be a valuable resource on many community concerns. The more recognizable FCCLA and your chapter names are, the more likely media representatives are to respond to your story ideas.

Types of Media

Understanding each type of media and its target audience is a crucial first step to putting your media plan in motion.

Newspapers

Newspapers provide ongoing, up-to-date coverage of national and local stories. Placing your story in a newspaper is a great way to reach decision makers in your community, such as potential sponsors, elected officials, and industry experts. There are typically two types of newspapers in your community—daily and weekly. Before you pitch a story to a newspaper, know how often it is published and who it reaches.

Magazines

Magazines, like newspapers, focus on stories with detailed fact-driven information and often report on a particular angle of the story that will be most interesting to their audience. Unlike newspapers, magazines require a much longer lead time for their stories.

Wire Services

Wire services are the nerve center of the media. Most media outlets in the United States are members of one of the major news services (Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI)). An up-to-date listing of state-by-state AP bureaus can be found at www.ap.org/pages/contact/contact.html.

Television

Television is regarded as the media vehicle with the furthest reach, but it is important to choose a TV outlet or program based on its audience and then tailor your message to fit its scope of coverage.

National network news stations (i.e. ABC, CBS, NBC, etc.) and cable news stations (i.e. CNN, MSNBC, etc.) often only focus on national stories. On the other hand, local affiliates spend a large amount of time focusing on local news.

Successful TV pitches require a visual element to the story. Hosting an event and inviting reporters to witness your Community Service activity are both good ways to provide a visual for TV cameras.

Radio

Determining your area stations' format and audience is an important step to including radio outreach in your media strategy. You should target stations that include talk radio and news segments. These stations are the prime radio stations to cover in-depth aspects of your program or to interview one of your spokespeople on the air.

Internet

The internet—especially news-oriented websites—are becoming a heavily relied upon source for easily accessed, reliable, and up-to-date information. Websites are targeted toward a specific audience, so be sure to take the time to

Media

understand where your audience is gathering information online before you begin your pitch.

It is a good idea to make your communication available on your website in a designated “media” section. This section should include media releases, background information, fact sheets, event listings, and contact information.

If you intend to secure a story with the traditional news outlet as well as the online version, you will need to pitch the story to both outlets.

When tracking online media coverage, you should check the website on the same day of your event.

Newsletters

Newsletters are an excellent way to reach a targeted audience. Your program newsletter can help you with membership development and can introduce everyone to your Community Service program.

Media Plan

When being interviewed for a story always relay the information in a conversational way. It can be intimidating to be interviewed for a story. Just take a deep breath and refer to your talking points when answering questions. Show enthusiasm, emotion, and confidence in what you are talking about. If the story is about FCCLA raising money for a cause stay away from, “FCCLA is proud to report we raised \$2,000 at our annual ...” and make the answers personable instead with, “We are so excited to make a difference for the American Cancer Society. Hard work pays off and next year we will raise even more!”

Now that you understand your media, you must be aware of what makes your story newsworthy.

Here is a checklist of newsworthy characteristics that will help you decide how your story rates on the news scale:

- **New Information:** Is it something the public doesn’t already know? Example: member award winners, new programs, and what your chapter is doing to solve a problem.
- **Timeliness:** Does it relate to something that is happening now, or will be happening soon? If you pay close attention to national news stories, you can

connect your story with a national cause/event. Know your media deadlines so that you can get them the information they need, when they need it.

- **Significance and Scope:** Does it affect the lives of large numbers of local residents?
- **Human Interest:** Is it a compelling story—one that will hold people’s interest? Will the story relate to people on an emotional level?
- **Uniqueness:** Is there a unique angle on the story—something that makes it special and unexpected?
- **Relevance:** Does the story relate to an important issue facing the community and its residents?

Of course, every story doesn’t have to meet every one of these qualifications, but the more you can tailor your story to accepted standards of what is news, the better your chances of getting it in the media.

Be sure to use the best route of delivery for your information. Now that you have your ideas and you’re ready to share them with the media, you have to determine how best to go about it.

Why you should have good relations with the media

As a member of an educational organization, you know how important it is to be visible in your community. You want people to be aware of all the great things your chapter is doing and, more importantly, you want people to understand how they can get involved.

The media’s power to make people act, feel, or think is undiminished by the growing number of sources that supply information to the public. Organizations that master the art of working with the media reap the benefits daily.

Even with scandals, tragedies, and celebrities dominating the news, it is still certainly possible for your story to make headlines. To accomplish this, you must regularly feed your local media contacts good story ideas.

Appearing in your local daily paper, on the evening news, or on a talk radio program can help cultivate new volunteers, publicize a fundraiser, promote your chapter’s community events, or get people talking about important issues—at no cost! Best of all, working with the media can be extremely fun and rewarding.

Media

Before contacting the media, make sure you understand what your chapter can offer them. To begin, ask yourself these questions:

- How does my chapter help people?
- What problems does my chapter help solve?
- What is interesting about my chapter, FCCLA, and FACS?
- What topics related to FCCLA might interest the media and the public?
- Who are our spokespersons that are available to the media?

One of the first steps to successful media coverage is knowing the right person to contact at the newspaper, radio, television, or magazine office. Make a quick-reference media directory, complete with contact phone and fax numbers, mailing addresses, and email addresses, learn who covers news related to your chapter's activities.

Also identify:

- how they like to receive news (mail, fax, phone, email)
- deadlines
- best time to call
- lead times for events or media conferences
- types of news in which they're interested
- types of stories for which they may call you.

Once you have provided the media with information about your chapter, the media is likely to contact you for more specific details. Being immediately responsive to their inquiries is vital to the relationship. Appoint someone in your chapter as the primary contact for media calls. Prepare a script with talking points of important issues to cover and rehearse the conversation with the spokesperson to make sure the discussion flows smoothly. Also appoint at least one back-up in case the primary person isn't available. All media inquiries need to go through the appointed contact person so that information can be mainstreamed and monitored.

After your story is published and you have established a connection with a media contact, make sure to keep the lines of communication open and friendly.

- Always remember to thank your media contacts when they run a story on your chapter or quote you in an article. Send a formal acknowledgement of the media outlet's help, such as a thank you note or card.
- When you make presentations in the community or school, and in conversations with elected officials and others be sure to mention what the media outlet is doing to help your chapter.
- For future story topics, initiate informal meetings (such as breakfasts or lunches) with media contacts to discuss your ideas and story angles. Reporters are overworked and underpaid. A little friendliness can work wonders.
- Keeping in contact with the media does not mean you should send them information every time you have a chapter meeting. Flooding the media with releases on non-news events will hinder your chapter's credibility. Try to ensure that when you contact the media it is about something that is truly newsworthy.

Good media relations can yield many benefits. Strong alliances with the media can:

- get your message out to the public
- educate the public about FCCLA and Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) education, or related courses as determined by the state department of education
- show the public the positive things your FCCLA chapter is doing
- retain members by making them proud to belong to a well-respected organization
- showcase your members.