

# TIPS FOR MAKING A GREAT CONFERENCE TIPSHEET

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“FAST TRACK: How to Write  
A Killer Tipsheet”

It is a tradition at IRE conferences for speakers to pass out tipsheets during their presentations. Copies of these tipsheets, which usually outline the speaker’s major points, are collected by IRE staff members and stored in the IRE Resource Center, where they are made available for journalists. This means the tipsheets you write for an IRE conference might end up in the hands of a journalist who did not hear you speak. For more information about the IRE Resource Center tipsheet database, visit <http://www.ire.org/resourcecenter/initial-search-tipsheets.html>.

*Here are a few tips for making your tipsheet easy to read and helpful for whomever might read it.*

1. **Make your tipsheet stand alone.** A great tipsheet can be understood without having to listen to the speaker’s presentation. That means your tipsheet should have a title; a byline that lists your name, title, where you work and some minimal contact information; and an introduction that explains what the tipsheet is about and why it is important. The tipsheet should also include the name of the conference and panel.
2. **Give your readers something they cannot get elsewhere.** Many speakers like to handout copies of example stories as tipsheets. These example stories can be very helpful, but they should not be the extent of your tipsheet. A great tipsheet should give readers tips on new techniques (writing, reporting, interviewing, programming, etc.); explain a new issue or law; or list helpful web sites or sources. A good rule of thumb: when writing your tipsheet, think about the kind of information you would find useful. A great strategy is to explain a new reporting technique and then provide an example story that used the technique.
3. **Make your tipsheet as specific as possible.** Many journalists turn to these tipsheets for reporting help and generalities like “be sure to talk to the experts” do not always help. What kind of experts should reporters speak with? What organizations do they work for? What are their phone numbers? The more specific you can make your tipsheet, the more helpful it will be.
4. **Give a digital copy of your tipsheet to the IRE Resource Center.** Most tipsheets are available online to IRE members at no cost. Please e-mail a digital copy of your tipsheet to [tipsheet@ire.org](mailto:tipsheet@ire.org). The digital file allows us to create a better PDF from your file.

*Here is a checklist of the features of a great conference tipsheet.*

- \_\_\_ A clear, concise title.
- \_\_\_ Your Name.
- \_\_\_ Your position or title.
- \_\_\_ Your affiliation (newspaper, magazine, television station, etc.).
- \_\_\_ Your contact information (usually phone and e-mail address).
- \_\_\_ Conference name, year and place (i.e. 2002 IRE National Conference, San Francisco).
- \_\_\_ Panel name.
- \_\_\_ Specific and/or unique information
- \_\_\_ E-mail a digital copy to [tipsheet@ire.org](mailto:tipsheet@ire.org) for the IRE Resource Center.