

NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____



Press Kit Activity

OBJECTIVE: Acting as news journalists, students will understand the role of a press kit in disseminating information from a special interest group (like The Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory and NASA) to the general public.

TEACHER/STUDENT RESOURCES: Access to the Internet and The Johns Hopkins APL TIMED Web site "Newsroom" at: <http://www.timed.jhuapl.edu/press2/index.html>

PRESS KITS

A "**press kit**" is an informational packet prepared by an organization and sent to professional journalists in order to gain publicity, share information with the public, or to advertise an event. The information minimally provides straight-forward facts in a "**fact sheet**" that the organization is willing to share with the public. Very often the press kit will also include a "**press release**," a professionally written article by the organization's publicity department, including the facts in a story line that represents the organization's point of view. The organization will invite journalists to ask follow-up questions by providing the names of organization representatives called "**contacts**."

After studying all of the information provided in the organization's press kit, the journalist will prepare a list of questions to ask the "contact" person. Journalists may ask for a clarification on an item that he/she doesn't understand, ask for additional facts, ask for an expansion of an idea, or even challenge the accuracy or truthfulness of an opinion or fact expressed in the press kit. On one hand, it is the job of the journalist to accurately and fairly report the facts and opinions of the organization seeking the publicity, and on the other hand, to ask the questions that the public wants and needs to know and to clarify and/or challenge opinions expressed by the organization.

Take a look at the press kit provided by the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory relating to its "TIMED Space Mission" found on the web at: <http://www.timed.jhuapl.edu/press2/index.html>

- Does this press kit provide a fact sheet?
- Does this press kit contain press releases? If so, how many?
- Are “contact” names provided?
- What additional information is provided in this press kit?

In this activity you will take on the role of a professional newspaper journalist and review all of the information provided by the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory’s press kit on the “TIMED Space Mission.” From the Johns Hopkins APL “TIMED Space Mission” Web page, download and print out copies of (1) all press releases, and (2) the fact sheet. Read through all printed materials with the intent of formulating three questions that you will submit to one of the “contact” people listed in the press kit.

Prepare at least one question in each of the following categories.

- **FACTS**

1. Ask a question that would require an additional fact that appears to be missing from the press kit or that you need to know for your article.
2. Clarify or challenge the accuracy of a fact presented in the press kit.

- **IDEAS**

1. Ask a question on ideas expressed in the press kit that you don’t understand.
2. State your own ideas on a topic in the press kit and ask for the contact person’s verification of your idea.

- **OPINIONS**

1. Ask for a clarification of an opinion expressed in the press release.
2. Challenge an opinion expressed in the press kit with opposing points of view from other sources.
3. Ask for a “quotable” quote on an opinion that you would like expressed by the contact person to a topic relevant to the press kit information.