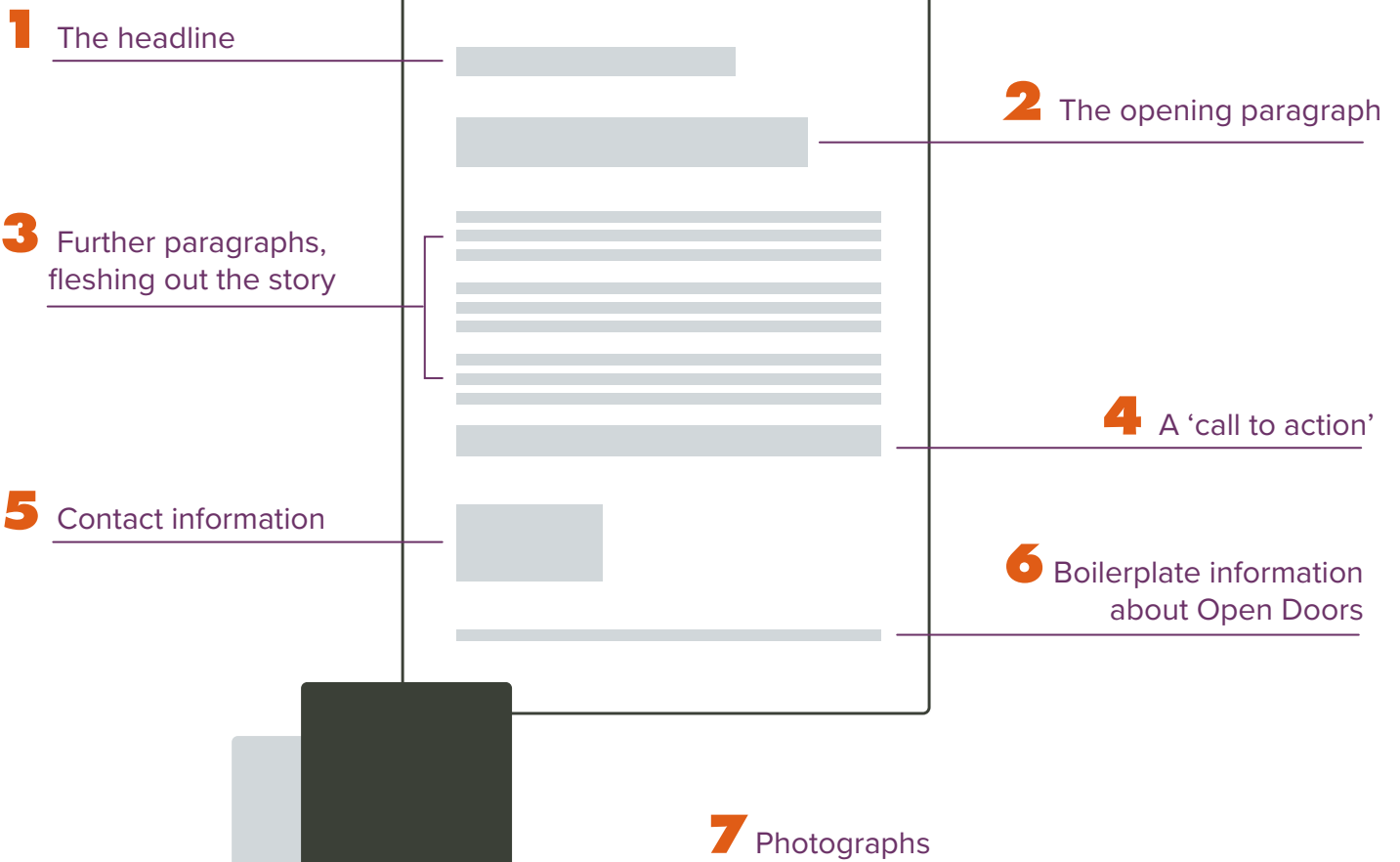




HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING FOR OPEN DOORS

Getting into your local paper or on local radio may sound like difficult, but it is actually easier than you think.

Local media want local good news stories. And if you give them a well-written press release (and good photo), you make their job easier too. These are the key components:



1 The headline

It needs to be one simple, short sentence summing up the story. For example:

"Brentford schoolgirl swims the channel (in six weeks)"

- Do not try any 'clever-clever' *Sun*-style headlines.
- Keep it simple but interesting.
- Write this bit last; it is easier to do once you have written the story and are 'in the zone'!

2 The opening paragraph

You have one short paragraph to grab the editor's (and reader's) attention. This sentence needs to explain the story (and why it is interesting), e.g.

"A 12-year-old schoolgirl from Syon, Brentford, is swimming the distance between Dover and Calais in her local municipal pool. It is to raise money for persecuted Christian believers around the world."

You will notice that I have kept the paragraph down to two short, simple sentences. Keep your writing clear and your sentences (and paragraphs) short.

3 Further paragraphs

Then, up to four further paragraphs fleshing out the story. Start with the most important information first!

"Jenny Stimpson, from Barnard Drive, will be swimming the distance in one-mile installments at Brentford Municipal Baths over the next six weeks. The fundraiser is to raise money for Open Doors UK & Ireland, a charity which supports Christians around the world who face persecution for their faith."

This is how your first full paragraph could read. You will notice it is written in a factual, journalistic 'third person' style as if it is already in a newspaper. Keep the language simple and punchy.

What do you say?

• **Answer the "W"s:**

- Who are you?
- What are you doing?
- Why are you doing it?
- Where and When will you be doing it?

• **Add some colour to your story**

Look for any 'gleaming details' you have that will brighten up the story. For instance:

"Jenny is such a passionate swimming enthusiast that she earned the nickname 'the mermaid' at her primary school. She plans to get up an hour earlier to complete the one-mile swimming shifts before she starts her school day."

• **Add in a couple of quotes in the appropriate places**

"Jenny says, "I wanted to support Open Doors after I read about what it's like to be a Christian in a country like North Korea. If you're found to have a copy of the Bible, you can end up in a prison camp doing hard labour for the rest of your life. Nobody should be punished for what they believe; it's so unfair."

"We're so proud of Jenny," said her father, Colin. "She's setting her alarm clock for half past five to do this. Her passion for fairness is an inspiration to the rest of us."

• **Also, feel free to drop in the following one-sentence description of Open Doors and its work somewhere**

"Open Doors UK & Ireland supports and speaks up for Christians around the world who are facing persecution for their faith."

4 A 'call to action'

"You can support Jenny via her JustGiving account: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jennyswims"

5 Contact information

"For further information, or for an interview with Jenny:

Telephone: 07444 556555

Email: jennyunicorn@gmail.com"

You can include more than one phone number. Make sure that *whenever* they phone, there will be someone to reply; you may only get one opportunity to speak to the media.

6 Boilerplate information about Open Doors

Feel free to cut and paste the following:

"About Open Doors UK & Ireland

Open Doors UK & Ireland is a Christian charity that supports persecuted Christians across the world. They work with local partners to distribute Bibles and other Christian resources, as well as providing support and vocational training to affected communities.

There are currently over 300 million Christians who face the threat of serious persecution for their faith. Open Doors works to raise awareness of their plight and advocate for change."

7 Photos

Attach one or two high-quality and high-resolution photos of yourself. Make eye contact with the camera and smile! Make them

appropriate to the fundraiser: if you're running a marathon, don't have a picture of yourself slouched on the sofa with TV Quick.

Where to send your press release to:

- Work out who your local media are: local newspapers, local radio, community TV, etc.
- Find the address of the newsdesk or news editor for each one.
- Send them the press release in the body of your email.
- Attach your photos as jpgs – no more than 2MB.
- Personalise each email with an opening couple of sentences before the email to say that you thought they might be interested in this story.
- The subject line of your email should start with 'Press release' followed by a very brief grabby headline. For instance,
"Press Release: Brentford schoolgirl 'swims Channel' in six months"
- If your local radio or other media have a religious show or section, contact the producer for this as well as the newsroom.

Finally, please do contact us at challenge@opendoorsuk.org to let us know when your story is featured so that we can support you further!