

Sharing stories effectively

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Thinking of stories as 'news'



- It's something new
- It's something out of the ordinary that doesn't happen every day. Eg:
 - *'Clowns come to church service'* is news; *'Minister leads church service'* is not.
 - *'Church launches building appeal'* is news; *'Church building appeal ongoing'* is not
- An upcoming service event, church play or activity is news, someone doing something for charity
- A special event for the whole community

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Thinking of stories as 'news' cont

- Special church accomplishments, like a church turning 100 is news or a celebration of volunteering at the church is news
 - Special accomplishments of specific congregants is news
 - A story of faith, life transformation or healing is news
 - An activity which relates to national issues is news. Eg the work of a food bank based at a church is news.

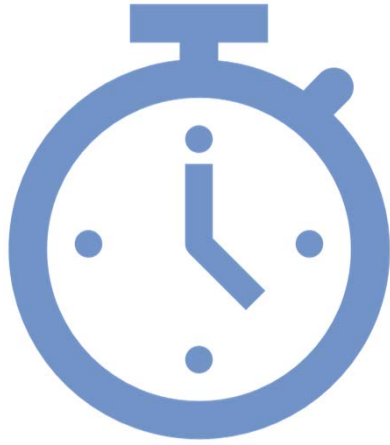
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Thinking of stories as 'news' cont

- It's about something local and relevant for local people (and the more people it affects the bigger the story)
- It's something that people will find interesting or people would want to know about
- If you want to attract your local media, your story is more likely to get attention and/or press coverage if you have a picture to go along with your story or can suggest one. Eg *'Minister against unjust trade'* is not news. *'Minister begins seven-day vigil on church roof in support of Fairtrade'* or *'Church aims to raise £300,000 to renovate its building by holding a fete'* is news.
- News is about people and events, **and** human-interest stories have greater appeal.

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Timing

If something happened in March, and your sharing this news in May, it's not news – it's old news.

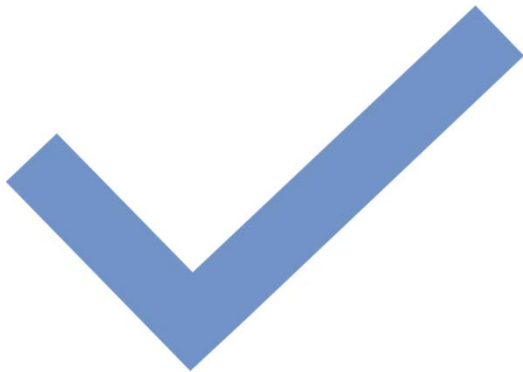
Get your news out at least two weeks before an event happening, or at most a week after.



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The five W's



- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?

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The five W's continued

With so many things competing for our attention, we have mere seconds to grab someone's attention.

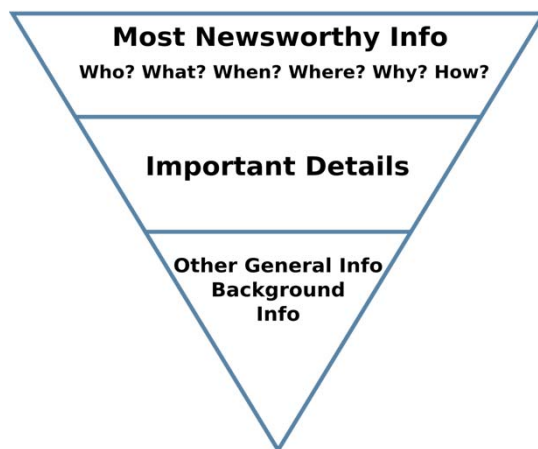
The reader needs to know **who, what, where, when, why, how**:

- Who is the article about?
- What happened or is happening?
- Where is this or did it take place?
- When is it or did it take place?
- Why is happening, why is it important?
- How is it happening, can people take part, find more etc.

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The inverted 'news' triangle



Everything the reader needs to know should be encapsulated within the first three paragraphs.

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Headlines

- Headlines are very important.
- They give the reader a snapshot of what the story is about.
- They need to be very succinct and include at least one of the five 'W's' primarily 'What' to explain what story is about
- For local media, what and where is ideal so the story is relevant for the paper you're aiming for. Eg a church story in Maidenhead wouldn't be suitable for Saffron Walden paper



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Audience – The 'pub/friend test'

- Our language tends to change when writing. We get formal, complicated, long-winded, we go around the houses instead of getting to the point.
- To write a good story and share it effectively, we need to think with the reader in mind.
- We cannot make assumptions that they'll know what we're talking about.
- As mentioned, the most important points the reader needs to know should be captured, ideally, within the first three sentences/paragraphs of a story. Aim for 25-30 words in each sentence/paragraph.

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Pub/friend test continued

- The age of the reader we should aim for is around 10-years-old.
- That way, we can make sure that our writing is clear, easy to understand, and to the point.
- How can we make sure our writing is clear and easy to understand?
- The pub/friend test - ask yourself: "How would I explain this story to a friend?"
- The way you would tell a friend is the way to write your story

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Summary

Think about exactly what it is you want to tell people

Timing: Your story needs to be written at least two weeks before an event happening or at max a week after.

Think of the inverted pyramid and include the five 'W's' in your story: who, what, where, when, why and how

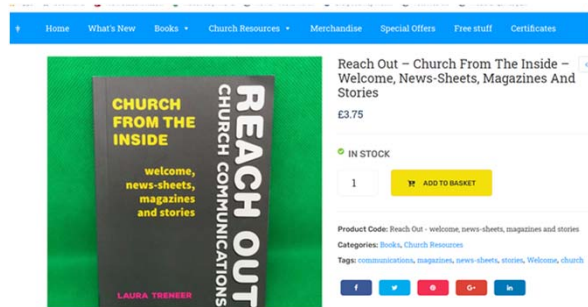
Write with the reader in mind: how would you tell a friend your story? Aim for a reader aged 10, that way you can make sure your writing is easy to read and easily understood.

Get your story up on your website, social media channels, and most importantly let URC Communications know your news so we can help share it.

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Four books in the *Reach Out: Church Communications* series

1) Welcome, news-sheets, magazines and stories; 2) social media; 3) websites; 4) displays notices boards, invitations, and PR. £3.75 each +p&p from urcshop.co.uk



Resources