

WRITING THE HEADLINE

Headline is the first, and perhaps only, impression you make on a prospective reader. Without a headline or post title that turns a browser into a reader, the rest of your words may as well not even exist.

But a headline can do more than simply grab attention. A *great* headline can also communicate a full message to its intended audience, and it absolutely must lure the reader into your body text.

At its essence, a compelling headline must promise some kind of benefit or reward for the reader, in trade for the valuable time it takes to read more.

In page Layout

- ❖ The layout editor should make the headlines work with the graphics and the art on the page. Most reader surveys show that newspaper readers look first at photos on a page, then headlines.
- ❖ The page designer should leave Ample Room so writers can create good headlines. Also, the layout editor should vary the Size and Shape of headlines to accurately grade the news elements for the reader.
- ❖ Some basic Types of headlines: **banner (streamer), hammer, kicker or eyebrow (above the main headline), sidesaddle, deck (usually half the point size of the main headline), drop, read-in, read-out, jump heads. Some Headline Technicalities**
- ❖ Don't get into the habit of relying on Squeezing or stretching the headline type to fit the space. To trained eyes, it can look sloppy, especially when the "doctored" headline appears near other headlines.
- ❖ In general, commas are used to replace 'and'; semicolons are used to split multi sentence headlines. Many desks do not allow colons to indicate attribution, except in rare cases, so it might be best to avoid that usage altogether.
- ❖ Some "headlines" words to avoid: slate, solon, nix, eyes, acronyms (unless they are well-known, such as CBI, NIA), names of people who are not well known. Don't convict someone in a headline (unless the story is about a conviction) use "in" instead of "for."

- ❖ Avoid repeating bugs or page titles in headlines. For example, in a regular column that runs with the bug "Insider Trading," avoid using the word "Insiders" in the headline.
- ❖ Avoid using the same word in several headlines that appear on the same page. This can easily bore the reader.

Some more Tips

- ❖ Best headline writers are spontaneous and creative; the best headlines instantly come to you.
- ❖ Headline writers have to be the best writers at the newspaper.
- ❖ Many times, the best headlines you come up with cannot be printed!
- ❖ Continuity leads to better headlines; one must write them day after day to get good at it.
- ❖ Read others' headlines to get ideas, but doing so isn't necessarily going to make you a better headline writer.
- ❖ The most-effective headlines are those that give an old cliché a new twist; readers are familiar with the cliché, but something different about it will reel them in.
- ❖ The more conversational the headline, the more the readers will like it.
- ❖ Don't be so quick to abandon using articles such as "a," "and" and "the"; sometimes these words are needed for clarity. Also, headline styles change over time.
- ❖ Four-part test for each headline:
 1. Is it accurate?
 2. Is it clear?
 3. Is it proper in tone?
 4. Does it have a twist?