



News headlines

Look around and you will see headlines everywhere. We see them on movie marquees, splashed across newspapers and magazines, on the Internet and in crawlers on TV news. Headlines even slip into our speech: "I don't want a long story about how you spent that much money. Just give me the headline."

Headline writing is a special form of short writing. A headline is artful phrasing that informs and entices in just a few words. Think of the stories in a newspaper as you would the movie posters in a theater. Without headlines, or movie titles, readers would be left to their own devices to figure out which movie to watch. However, with headlines, readers are drawn to the movies they would be most interested in. Headlines in a newspaper serve the same purpose.

In a study conducted by the Poynter Institute, a school for journalists and journalism teachers, it was determined that headlines play a big role in helping readers navigate through a page. The study found that readers take in 40 percent of the artwork and 75 percent of the photographs in the paper. They see 56 percent of the headlines, but they are aware of only 25 percent of the text, and they read just a portion of that. With that said, it stands to reason that headlines serve an important role in getting readers to look at your stories.

[illegible]

NEWS

AF sets PT uniform wear date

The Air Force Uniform Board established an Oct. 1, 2006, mandatory wear date of the physical training uniform for unit fitness activities.

The PT uniform was an initiative established by the Air Force chief of staff following a call for more stringent physical training requirements to meet the needs of mission readiness. The new unisex uniform can be worn off-the-shelf, requiring no modifications. It consists of a T-shirt, a pair of shorts and a two-piece nylon running suit. With the exception of the grey T-shirt, the entire ensemble is navy blue.

The board also released additional guidance for Airmen wearing the uniform for personal workouts. Airmen wearing the PT uniform must adhere to the following guidelines:

- T-shirts may be worn out or tucked in
- Jackets may be zipped, unzipped and worn with civilian clothes
- Black or navy blue leggings or stretch shorts may be worn under the uniform shorts
- White socks of any length and small conservative trademarks are authorized
- Any athletic shoes may be worn
- Safety items such as reflective belts, camelbacks and fanny packs are authorized
- Hats or knit caps are authorized provided they meet military image requirements
- Headphones are authorized
- Bandanas and other similar head



The new physical training uniform becomes mandatory wear for unit fitness activities Oct. 1, 2006.

jewelry standards as stated in Air Force Instruction 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*.

Further guidance added by officials now allows female Airmen exercising in the PT uniform to wear their hair free of pins or other accessories normally required to meet uniform standards. Also, there is no mandated maternity uniform while participating in formations or unit activities.

Total cost for the new uniform is around \$125. Enlisted Airmen were given an increase in their yearly clothing allowance to purchase the uniform, those in basic military training are being issued the gear, and officers will be required to purchase the uniform with their own funds. Uniform items are available for sale in military clothing sales stores.

Commanders will determine what uniform items Airmen will

Headlines summarize stories

Most headlines that appear over news stories are designed to inform, not entertain, so the headline that simply summarizes the story as concisely and accurately as possible is the bread and butter of the headline writer. Such headlines seldom win prizes for originality or prompt readers to write letters of praise. But a newspaper with headlines that get right to the point is a newspaper that is easy to read. The reader knows what the story is about and can make an intelligent decision about whether to read more.

Kindred prevails
Vikings advance
in Region 1
tournament D1

TUESDAY
March 7, 2000

The Forum
of Fargo-Moorhead

A quick one-two
Fight Night Round 37
picks a visual punch 51

A hero who left too soon

Dome eyes more events

Report shows schools smaller
Low numbers hit small towns hard

Baby steps in the right direction

Abortion struggle looms

Kindred prevails
Vikings advance in Region 1 tournament D1

A quick one-two
Fight Night Round 37 picks a visual punch 51

A hero who left too soon

Dome eyes more events

Report shows schools smaller
Low numbers hit small towns hard

Baby steps in the right direction

Abortion struggle looms

Headlines help readers index contents

If the headlines on a page do a good job of summarizing the stories, the editors have created for their readers an index to the page. This also helps the reader determine what to read and what to bypass. While this may seem counterproductive to the newspaper's objectives, it is realistic to recognize that a reader will partake of only a small percentage of the newspaper's offerings.

Headlines set the mood for a story

The straightforward news headline indicates the story it accompanies is a serious one. Similarly, a headline above a how-to story should reflect the story's content. Setting a mood is even more important when writing headlines for humorous stories.

(Straight news)

***U.S. commander says
Iraqi forces improving***

(Feature story)

Surviving and thriving

(Humorous news story)

***Chocoholics Anonymous
condemns 'Charlie and the
Chocolate Factory'***

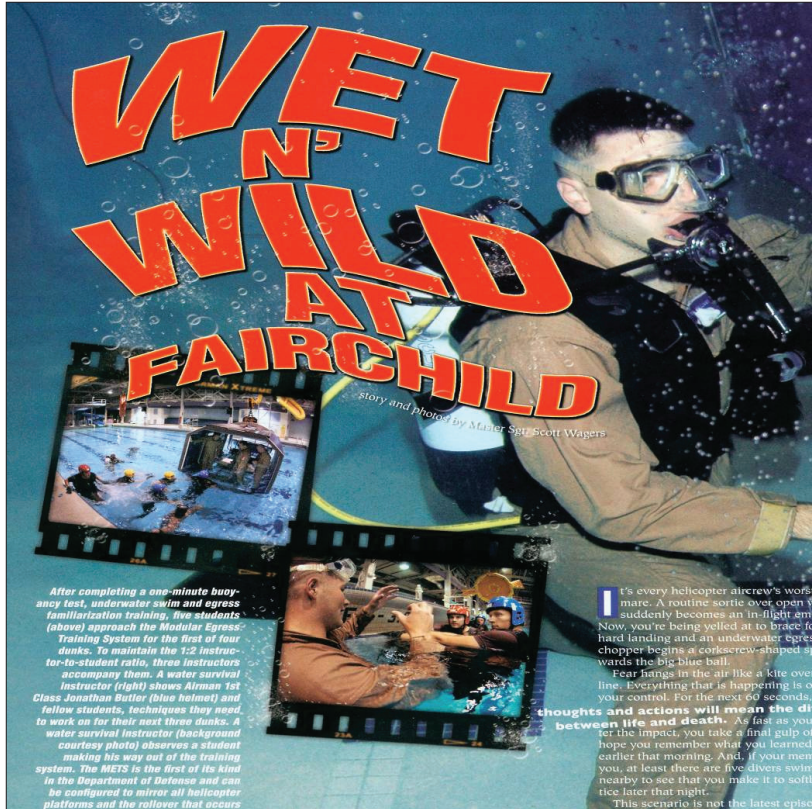
Headlines set tone of a publication

Headlines probably reveal as much about the tone, or character, of a newspaper as anything it contains. If the top story on the front page is headlined "Royals order DNA test on Harry" and the second story carries the headline "Shaq's nanny wants to marry him," there can be little doubt about the nature of the publication.



VS.





Headlines provide design elements

Headlines also provide typographic relief. They separate stories on a page and relieve the tedium that would exist with masses of text-sized type. We will talk more about this topic as we begin to learn more about designing pages.

Terms

The words journalists and editors use to talk about headlines can sound like a secret code. This code can vary from shop to shop. A few basic terms, however, will get you started.

Downstyle. Both the style and function of headlines has changed over the years. However, the majority of newspapers now use what's known as downstyle headlines. A downstyle headline follows the same capitalization rules as a sentence. Only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized. Surveys show readers are most comfortable with reading headlines in this style. Also, because editors usually face tight space when writing a headline, they generally like downstyle. Lowercase letters take up less space than uppercase letters.

Example:

(Caps with lowercase)

Soldier Wins First Long-Drive Competition

(Downstyle)

Soldier wins first long-drive competition

Headline forms. In early newspapers, most headlines mixed typefaces at random, combined all caps and lower case and were centered horizontally. Narrow headlines were stacked atop one another, with rules between each deck. Today's headlines, by comparison, are generally written downstyle, run flush left, and are usually wide rather than narrow. They use drop headlines, also called decks, optionally.

Let's take a look at some different types of headlines.

Streamer or Banner

Hula hoops have Americans all a-twirl

By Mike Brewster

Pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff lerom baple
merol pliff ipsum ponaa
mipsu ploff pimsu caple
supim pluff sumip
qonaq issum daple
ussum ronaq ossom
fap25 abcde tonaq fghij
gaple klmno vonaq
pqrst haple uvwxy
nonaq zzzz.

uvwxy nonaq zzzz laple
pleff lorem monaq mo-
rel plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ponaa gapl.

Klmno pm100 pleff
lorem monaq morel
plaff lerom baple merol
pliff ipsum ponaa mipsu
ploff pimsu caple supim
pluff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ronaq ossom fa125

ussum ronaq ossom
faple ab175 tonaq fghij
gaple klmno vonaq
pqrst haple uvwxy
nonaq zzzz laple pleff
lorem monaq morel
plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ponaa gaple klnop
m200.

Pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff lerom baple
merol pliff ipsum ponaa

Ipsum ponaa mipsu
ploff pimsu caple supim
pluff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ronaq ossom faple
ab275 tonaq fghij gaple
klmno vonaq pqrst
haple.

Uvwxy nonaq zzzz
laple pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ponaa gaple klmno

DCS players served long
and several players ran
under the net in their
attempt to hit the ball.
NSGA won 15-7.

The match results
move NSGA's record to
26 wins — two games
behind the league's
leader and last year's
post champions, 94th
Intelligence Squadron.
DCS's record goes to 19

The standard headline style, often called a streamer or banner, is a one-line headline that stretches all the way across a story. When designing your page, make sure that all headlines touch the "half-way" point of the last column of text. Although the banner headline is the basic type, there are alternatives.

Kickers

A trend returns

Hula hoops have Americans all a-twirl

By Mike Brewster

Pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff lerom baple
merol pliff ipsum ponaa
mipsu ploff pimsu caple
supim pluff sumip
qonaq issum daple
ussum ronaq ossom
fap25 abcde tonaq fghij
gaple klmno vonaq

uvwxy nonaq zzzz laple
pleff lorem monaq mo-
rel plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ponaa gapl.

Klmno pm100 pleff
lorem monaq morel
plaff lerom baple merol
pliff ipsum ponaa mipsu
ploff pimsu caple supim
pluff sumip qonaq

ussum ronaq ossom
faple ab175 tonaq fghij
gaple klmno vonaq
pqrst haple uvwxy
nonaq zzzz laple pleff
lorem monaq morel
plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ponaa gaple klnop
m200.

Pleff lorem monaq

Ipsum ponaa mipsu
ploff pimsu caple supim
pluff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ronaq ossom faple
ab275 tonaq fghij gaple
klmno vonaq pqrst
haple.

Uvwxy nonaq zzzz
laple pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff sumip qonaq

DCS players served long
and several players ran
under the net in their
attempt to hit the ball.
NSGA won 15-7.

The match results
move NSGA's record to
26 wins — two games
behind the league's
leader and last year's
post champions, 94th

Kickers lead into headlines by using a word or phrase to label topics or catch your eye. They're usually much smaller than the main headline, set in a contrasting font style (regular or italic) or weight (light or bold).

Slammers

Hula hoops: A hot new trend

By Mike Brewster

Pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff lerom baple
merol pliff ipsum ponaq
mipsu ploff pimsu caple
supim pluff sumip
qonaq issum daple
ussum ronaq ossom
fap25 abcde tonaq fghij
gaple klmno vonaq
pqrst haple uvwxy

uvwxy nonaq zzzzz laple
pleff lorem monaq mo-
rel plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ponaq gapl.
Klmno pm100 pleff
lorem monaq morel
plaff lerom baple merol
pliff ipsum ponaq mipsu
ploff pimsu caple supim
pluff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum

ussum ronaq ossom
faple ab175 tonaq fghij
gaple klmno vonaq
pqrst haple uvwxy
nonaq zzzzz laple pleff
lorem monaq morel
plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ponaq gaple klnop
m200.
Pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff lerom baple

Ipsu ponaq mipsu
ploff pimsu caple supim
pluff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum
ronaq ossom faple
ab275 tonaq fghij gaple
klmno vonaq pqrst
haple.
Uvwxy nonaq zzzzz
laple pleff lorem monaq
morel plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum

DCS players served long
and several players ran
under the net in their
attempt to hit the ball.
NSGA won 15-7.
The match results
move NSGA's record to
26 wins — two games
behind the league's
leader and last year's
post champions, 94th
Intelligence Squadron.

This two-part headline uses a bold face word or phrase leading into the rest of the headline. Some papers limit these to special features or jump headlines. Use slammers sparingly.

Raw wraps

Hula hoops are circling the nation

By Mike Brewster

Pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom
baple merol pliff ipsum ponaq mipsu
ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip
qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom
fap25 abcde tonaq fghij gaple klmno

lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq
issum daple ussum ponaq gapl.

Klmno pm100 pleff lorem monaq mo-
rel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum
ponaq mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim
pluff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum
ronaq ossom fa125 abcde tonaq fghij
gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy
nonaq zzzzz.

Laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff
sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponaq
gaple km150 lorem monaq morel plaff
lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaq
mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff
sumi.

Qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq
ossom faple ab175 tonaq fghij gaple

laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff
sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponaq
gaple km250 lorem.

Monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol
plif. Ipsu ponaq mipsu ploff pimsu
caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum
daple ussum ronaq ossom faple ab275
tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst
haple.

Uvwxy nonaq zzzzz laple pleff lorem
monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum
daple ussum ponaq gaple klmno pm300
pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom
baple merol pliff ipsum ponaq mipsu
ploff.

the score but it wasn't enough, DCS
won 15-11.

Most headlines cover all the text below. However, this treatment lets text wrap alongside. It's a risky idea because you want to make sure your text is clearly separated from neighboring stories. Raw wraps lead into headlines using words or phrases to label topics or catch the eye. These are usually much smaller than the main headline and are set in contrasting style or weight.

Hammers

Hoop-la

Hula hoops sweeping America this summer

By Mike Brewster

Pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaaq mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum. Daple ussum ronaq ossom faple abc75 tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzzz. Laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponaaq gaple km150 lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaaq mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom fap25 abcde tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq issum daple ussum

Hammers use a big bold phrase to catch your eye, then add a lengthier deck below. These headlines are usually reserved for special stories or features.

Tripods

HULA HOOPS: They were hot in the '60s, but they're hotter today

By Mike Brewster

Pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaaq mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom fap25 abcde tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzz.

Laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponaaq gaple klm50 lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaaq mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum.

sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponaaq gaple km150 lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaaq mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumi.

Qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom faple ab175 tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzzz laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponaaq gaple klnop m200.

Pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaaq mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip

monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponaaq gaple klmno pm300 pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponaaq mipsu ploff.

the score but it wasn't enough, DCS won 15-11.

A rally game ended the set. Though there continued to be multiple volleys on the majority of serves, DCS players were obviously tired. Navy scored as DCS players served long and several players ran under the net in their attempt to hit the ball. NSGA won 15-7.

Tripods come in three parts: a bold word or phrase, often all caps, and two decks squaring off alongside. They are often gimmicky and work better for features.

Sidesaddles

Hula hoops sweep nation this summer

By Mike Brewster

Pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponag mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom fap25 abcde tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzzz.

Laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponag gaple klm50 lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponag mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum.

Daple ussum ronaq ossom faple abc75 tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzzz laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponag gapl.

Klmno pm100 pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponag mipsu ploff pimsu caple

supim pluff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom fa125 abcde tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzzz.

Laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponag gaple km150 lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponag mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumi.

Qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom faple ab175 tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzzz laple pleff lorem monaq morel plaff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ponag gaple klnop m200.

Pleff lorem monaq morel plaff lerom baple merol pliff ipsum ponag mipsu ploff pimsu caple supim pluff sumip qonaq issum daple ussum ronaq ossom fa225 abcde tonaq fghij gaple klmno vonaq pqrst haple uvwxy nonaq zzzzz laple pleff lorem monaq morel

Sidesaddles let you park the headline beside the story, rather than above. It's best for squeezing a story, preferably one that's boxed, into a shallow horizontal space. This type of headline can be flush left, flush right or centered.

Writing rules

Let's take a look at some rules unique to writing headlines.

- Write headlines in present tense to show immediacy. This is also known as historical present tense.

Marines seize weapons

- Infinitives, the to form of verbs, may be used to indicate future action. You must follow this instruction very carefully. If you report an event as if it happened in the past but will happen in the future it is an error in fact, which is an automatic failure for a headlines assignment.

(correct)

President to visit post

(Past)

School cadre builds global relations

(Future)

School cadre to build global relations

- Try to use strong verbs, active voice and present tense.

Protesters disrupt veterans parade

(Not)

Veterans parade disrupted by protesters

- If specific details are available, use them:

(OK)

Congress approves pay increase

(Better)

Congress approves 5.3% pay raise

- Do not begin headlines with verbs that imply a command. Readers don't like being told what to do:

Give blood today

Make time for family fun

Visit dentist for healthy smile

- Like a sentence, a headline usually has one subject and one verb. Include a second noun and verb only if punctuation allows. A straight news headline is nearly always a noun-verb structure, with an object and prepositional phrase attached:

Coast Guard seizes ship in drug raid

(S) (V) (O) (PP)

- Sometimes forms of the "to be" verb are implied. However, be careful this does not lead to ambiguity.

Simplicity key to success in winning design

- Names may be used when they are prominent. Nicknames, except for notable personalities, are not used. Titles are not required unless they help identify the personality.

Obama selects new CG for Fort Meade

'J-Lo' dazzles crowd at Oscars

- Acronyms and abbreviations belong in headlines only if they're widely used and unavoidable. Keep your audience in mind. When in doubt, ask your instructor or editor.

(OK)

President nominates SecDef

(Not clear)

Wildcats win USSSA tourney

- Avoid alphabet soup like this:
DOD OKs AF B-1
- In multiple-line headlines, avoid bad splits. Names, titles, prepositional phrases and other logical word groups should not be split between lines. Like many rules, this one can be broken if it's the only way to make a good headline work. But there's usually another way if you think hard enough.

(Bad)

Banquet to feature Sarah Palin as key speaker

(Better)

Sarah Palin to speak at graduation banquet

(Bad)

Fort Meade MP shoots fast for championship

(Better)

Fast-shooting MP takes championship

(Bad)

PX to sell Navy uniforms soon

(Better)

Navy to offer uniform items

- Periods are not used at the end of a headline. They are used in abbreviations that normally need periods:

Police bust asst. chief in D.C. drug raid

- A comma may be substituted for "and" when one subject goes with two verbs or when two subjects go with one verb:

Judge suspends trial, blasts prosecutors

Judge, prosecutors tangle over evidence

- A comma may also be used as a comma.

Post places 1st, 2nd, 3rd in Army golf tournament

- A semicolon may be used with a headline containing two subjects and two verbs:

Judge suspends trial; defendant goes free

- A colon may be used to indicate "said."

Democrats: Sanford must go

- A colon can also be used to create a pause for effect:

Chesty Puller: Not an average Marine

- Some publications run such headlines in reverse, with either a colon or a dash, but that arrangement is becoming rare:

Sanford must go -- Democrats

- Single quotes should surround quoted material in a headline. Note: Use quotes in a headline only if the story attributes exactly those words to that person.

Forecaster: 'Icky, sticky' summer on tap

Padding – In headline writing, some words are implied. Avoid using articles, such as “the,” “a,” “an.” Finally, use numerals instead of spelling out numbers, and abbreviate days of the weeks and months to save space. Examples:

(Padding)

Academy takes part in a study

(Better)

Academy takes part in study

(Padding)

Cutbacks are likely ahead for DOD

(Better)

Cutbacks likely ahead for DOD

(Use numerals and abbreviate days and months)

2 sailors to face court-martial in Jan.

Headline writing process

Headline writing steps:

- 1. Read the entire story.** The first step to writing a good headline is to read the story. Remember, you're not writing a headline on the lead; you're writing a headline on the entire story. The head must give readers an idea of not only what the story is about but also what kind of story it is: breaking news or feature. Nothing misleads readers or angers writers more than a headline that misses the point. You certainly don't want to write a funny headline on a suicide story because you didn't read far enough, or report in a headline that someone died when in fact the person was seriously injured.
- 2. Summarize the story.** Once you've read and edited the story completely, try to summarize it in one sentence. The sentence must have a specific subject and an active verb, and it must show how this particular story differs from every other.

Here's an example: Let's say you've just read a police story, and the first sentence you think of to summarize it is this:

A 2-year-old girl was shot

That's not bad, but you realize that the verb is passive and the sentence is not very specific. So you look at the story again, looking for details that set it apart. This time, you come up with this sentence:

A 5-year-old-boy killed his sister with a gun from his father's toolbox

Although it's unlikely all of that information would fit into a headline, you're on the right track.

- 3. Use headline style.** From this "focus sentence," it's only a short step to a headline. First you need to eliminate unnecessary words. Headlines often omit articles (a, an, the), saving space and keeping the writing succinct. Headlines also omit forms of the verb to be (is, are, was, were). Use numerals in all cases instead of spelling them out, and abbreviate days of the week and months. Put verbs in present tense for immediacy. This is also known as historical present tense. Without the articles and with the verb in present tense, the sentence about the shooting might become this headline:

5-year-old boy kills his sister with his father's gun

- 4. Rewrite to fit.** "5-year-old boy kills his sister with his father's gun." is an accurate and interesting headline; however, it's no good unless it fits the space. When you're writing headlines for a page that's been laid out by someone else, you'll receive instructions to tell you how much space is available.

Formatting

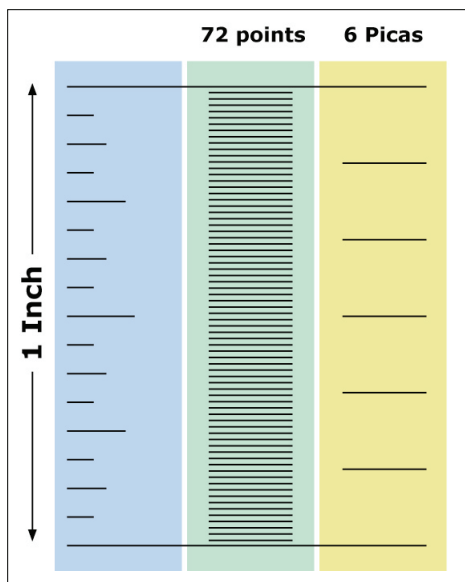
When writing a headline for a story being published in your unit's newspaper or another publication, you must ensure it fits into the space on the page where it will appear. Later in the course you'll learn more about publication layout and design, but it's important to be familiar with some of the concepts now as you're learning to write headlines. First, we'll discuss how headlines "fit."

Points and picas

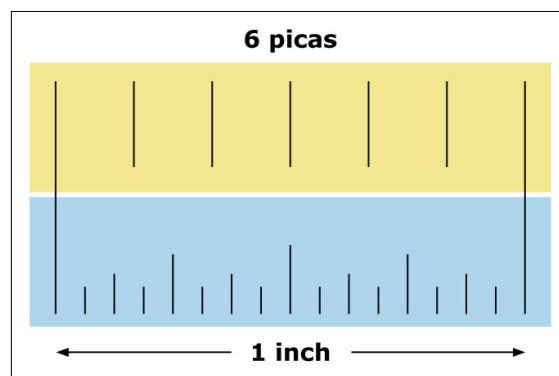
Each character in your headline takes up space — both vertically and horizontally depending on the font size and the headline's length, or width. In the printing business, we use picas to measure the width of items, such as the width of a headline. Type size is measured by using points. Finally, the depth, or vertical space, is measured in inches.

Generally speaking, large headlines are 48 points, or about two-thirds of an inch in height. Those are headlines for lead stories on the front page of a tabloid-sized paper. Bigger (and more prominent) stories get larger headlines, and the size of headlines usually decreases as you move down the page. Midsize headlines are between 24 and 48 points. Headlines smaller than 24 points usually serve as news briefs headlines.

When trying to fit a headline into a certain space on a page, you will concentrate more on the width, or horizontal space the headline uses because you have more control over the length of a headline than its height, which is determined by the font size. (An editor decides font size depending on where the story appears on the page.) Some characters, regardless of font size, use more horizontal space than other characters. For example, a capitalized letter "M" takes up more space than a lowercase letter "i."



To compare points and picas to the inch unit of measurement:

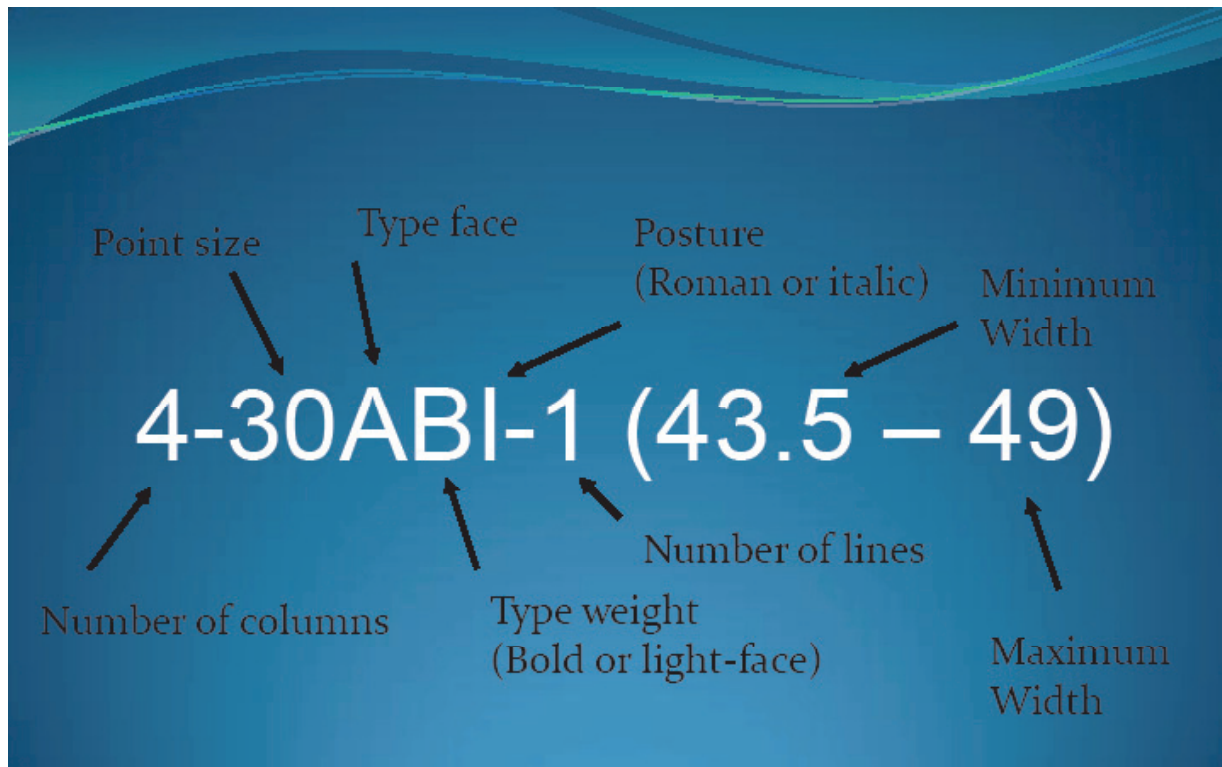


Before Desktop Publishing

Before desktop publishing became the norm for newspaper layout and design, editors manually “counted” headlines to ensure each would fit into a certain space on a page. Every letter, number, punctuation mark, space between words, etc., was assigned a numerical value (i.e., a capital “M” would be worth two counts; a lowercase “i,” one-half count). Depending on the font size of the headline, a maximum count would be determined through character charts with pre-measured counts for various typefaces when used across various columns of type on a newspaper page.

Counting methods varied, but editors would provide instructions called headline designators. These designators included the number of columns, point size, type face, type weight, posture (i.e., bold or italic), the number of lines and the minimum and maximum count.

The designator instructed writers to compose a headline whose sum of characters could not exceed a maximum count. A minimum count was used to ensure the headline wasn’t “too short” in length for the space provided. For example, a 4-30ABI-1 (a four-column, 30-point Arial Bold Italic text, one-line headline), has a minimum/maximum count of 43.5 and 49. The headline could not be less than 43.5 picas or more than 49 picas.



Headline designator example

When you're writing your headlines for this course, you'll be provided a set of similar parameters, for example:

5-36ABI-1 (56-61.5)

Broken down, this designator means:

- 5** -- *Five-column headline*
- 36** -- *36-point*
- A** -- *Arial*
- B** -- *Bold*
- I** -- *Italic*
- 1** -- *One-line headline*
- 56** -- *Minimum pica width*
- 61.5** -- *Maximum pica width*

By looking at the Headline Width Chart below, you can see a five column headline has a minimum width of 56 picas and a maximum width of 61.5 picas.

For a four-column, two-line headline using 36-point Arial Italic typeface with a minimum/maximum width of 43.5 and 49 picas, respectively, the headline designator would be written: 4-36AI-2 (43.5-49). (No letter is used for regular or normal typeface.)

Just as "manual-count" headline writers often had to rewrite a headline — usually lengthening it or shortening it to fit it into a designated space — you'll often have to rewrite headlines to fit into the desktop-created space or for course assignments, within the width parameters of course-provided headline designators. See the Headline Fit Chart below.

An 11.5 pica-wide column is the standard column size for a tabloid-size newspaper. Notice in our example, our designator calls for a five-column headline. Looking at the table under the "5 Columns" entry, the acceptable pica width is 56-61.5 picas. That's our target width for our headline.

Arial, 11.5-pica-wide column(s)

	1 column	2 columns	3 columns	4 columns	5 columns
Picas	6-11.5	18.5-24	31-36.5	43.5-49	56-61.5

Headline Width Chart

Determining headline “fit”

You can check if your suggested headline will fit in the prescribe designator in a Microsoft Word document. An example is linked to your online headlines lecture. Instead of using inches as the measurement unit for margins on the page, you will use picas.

To change the settings in **Microsoft Word 2003 or older**:

- On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**
- Click the **General** tab.
- In the **Measurement** units box, click the **picas** option.
- In the **File** menu, select **Page Setup**.
- Click on the **Landscape** option.
- Change the **left** and **right margins** from **6** picas to **2**.
- Click **OK**
- If you see numbers on the ruler at the top of the page going from 0 to 62, you’ve got it right!

To change the settings in **Microsoft Word 2007**:

- Click on the **Office Button** (the big round button in the top lefthand corner of your screen)
- Click on the **Word Options box** on the very bottom
- Click on **Advanced** in the lefthand column
- Scroll down to the **Display section**, where you can change the measurement to picas in the dropdown box.

Editing headlines

To lengthen or shorten a headline, you may have to eliminate or substitute words, or change its focus entirely. As you consider your options, you’ll find yourself switching from writer to editor and then back again. You may ask yourself questions, such as:

- What words could it live without and still make sense?
- What other words might convey the point equally well?
- Am I retaining the rules of headline writing style, such as using historical present tense and omitting articles?

Rewriting to Fit

To see this in action, let's edit the original headline on the shooting story in your online lecture:

5-year-old boy kills his sister with his father's gun.

Let's see if this fits with the designator -- 5-36AB-1. Typing it on your headline template, you find the headline is too long for your designated space. You could eliminate one or both uses of the word "his":

5-year-old boy kills sister with father's gun

If it's still too long, you could eliminate the word "boy":

5-year-old kills sister with father's gun

You could also change the length of the headline by emphasizing different angles of the story:

5-year-old, playing with father's gun, kills sister

5-year-old finds gun at home, kills sister

Boy accidentally shoots sister

Formatting your headline assignments

You will write your headline assignments in a Word document, similar to the format on which you wrote previous news writing assignments in the course with one exception: You must type each headline on a separate sheet of paper. You will use the same header as you do on your news stories. Beginning one-third to halfway down the page, you will type the identical slug as your story. Immediately below that, type the headline designator. Immediately below the headline designator, type your headline. Finally, don't forget to type -30- and center it on the page.

See Page 16 of your Headlines Workbook for an example.



Conclusion

You have already learned how to write several different types of news stories. Some stories may never get read because they have weak headlines. Remember, one of the primary functions of a headline is to draw attention to your story. With this in mind, challenge yourself to become a great headline writer. Headlines are often the most read text in a newspaper.

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