Writing Headlines

Typography
Fonts: type faces
serif and sans serif type
AGaramond, Times New Roman, Americana Arial, Gill Sans Mt, Verdana

The same font can be
roman (normal)
italic

bold
bold italic

Type size is measured in points
12 points = 1 pica
6 picas = 1 inch

9.5 or 10 point type are common
newspaper text sizes:
This is 9.5 point text
This is 10 point text

Headlines range from 18 pt for briefs (this is 18 pt)
to 60 pt on an average news day.

24 pt
36 pt
42 pt
48 pt
60 pt
72 pt
The space between the lines of type is measured in points.

The space is lead, or leading
A newspaper with 9.5 pt type would have about 10 pt leading (called 9.5 on 10).

Newspaper columns are measured in picas and points
12 pts = 1 pica = about 0.167 inch
6 picas = about 1 inch
   (6 x 12 pts = 72 pts)

The columns of many newspapers are 11 picas + 8 points wide (called 11p8)
   11p8 = about 2 inches
The white space between the columns, called the gutter, is 1 pica (or 12 pts) wide (0.167 inches).

Headline components
• type face (font)
• size of the head (in points)
• number of columns
• number of lines in the head

Writing the Headline
A good headline must
• Accurately summarize the story
Parks worker arrested in drug bust

Head doesn't give latest news

HB Wave 29 Jan 09

Edison graduate retires

Review alphabet soup

MPA wants an outsider

Mexico Institute for Women

Rancho Cucamonga

R.C. city staff plan $100 million budget

HB Independent

HUNTINGTON BEACH — City officials have yet to decide whether a park employee arrested last month for operating a drug lab out of his Lake Forest home should be fired, or even disciplined.

"We're reviewing the entire matter," city personnel director William Osness said.

SEE ARREST PAGE 10
Writing the Headline
A good headline must
• Attract the reader’s attention

Writing the Headline
A good headline must
• Help the reader categorize the contents of the page
  – placement and size help set the tone of the newspaper

Writing the Headline
A good headline must
• Help set the tone of the newspaper
Writing the Headline

- Help depict the mood of the story
  - serious heads for serious stories

Stag’s Splashy Exit Leaves Laguna Talking

-Wildlife: Deer crashes through home, swims to sea. Lifeguards turn it back, but it dies anyway.
Tips for writing good headlines
• Read – and understand – the story before starting to write the headline
• Be clear, precise and accurate
• Say what is most important
• Use the story’s key words

A barge on the Hudson River carrying more than 2 million gallons of oil hit a rock Wednesday just south of Athens in upstate New York, spilling some its cargo into the river.

Coast Guard and local water district officials said they did not know how much oil spilled into the river or if the spill would affect the area’s water supply.

Key words:
barge, cargo, oil
hits rock, spills oil
Hudson River

Tips for writing good headlines
• Watch out double meaning or confusing wording

Barge hits submerged rock, spills oil into Hudson River

Tips for writing good headlines
• Use the active voice as much as you can

President vetoes clean-air bill
Carona allegedly tried to hide files
Tips for writing good headlines

• Use the passive voice when the receiver of the action is more important
  President wounded by gunman

• Only use names that people will recognize
  Marine, jailed for contempt, is released

• Use the present tense for recent events:
  Brush fire destroys 20 homes
  – Exception: new disclosures about past events
    Reagan OK’d arming Contras,
    North says in upcoming book

– Exception: stories about upcoming events
  Bush leaving for China on Tuesday

• Use correct grammar
  You can shorten verb phrases in headline
  Teacher [is] cleared of gun, drug charges
Tips for writing good headlines
• Use words properly
  *Japan* president charged in *bribes*
  *Japan’s* leader charged with bribery

Tips for writing good headlines
• Shun *headlines* and cliches
  *GOP* solons rap Dems’ tax plan

Tips for writing good headlines
• Don’t assume the reader has been following the story and knows the story background as well as you do
  *Voyager’s* batteries fail

Tips for writing good headlines
• Be original; don’t parrot a clever lead

Tips for writing good headlines
• Avoid colon heads
  *Report: Cigarettes can cause cancer*
• Avoid question heads
  *Cigarettes cause of cancer?*
From the Feb. 9, 2000, edition of the Sun in England:

It's a sports story about how the Inverness Caley Thistle football club destroyed Glasgow Celtic in the 3rd round of the Scottish FA cup.

The upset would be akin to the CSF Titans beating the NY Yankees 12-0. The Celtic coach was fired after the game.

This was considered the most embarrassing defeat in something like 32 years.

The headline was:

**Super Caley Go Ballistic; Celtic Are Atrocious**

Tips for writing good headlines

- Shun sexism and unnecessary ethnic references
  
  *Woman to head Irvine Co.*
  
  *Mexican-American arrested in fatal hit-run*

Tips for writing good headlines

- Be selfish with the space allocated for the head
  
  - Don't pad the head with unnecessary words; use the space for additional information
  
  *Court fines drunken driver*
  
  *Drunken driver fined $1,000*
**Tips for writing good headlines**

- Be selfish with the space allocated for the head
  - Always use single quotes
    - ‘Citizen Kane’ named best film of 20th century
  - Replace the word “and” with a comma
    - Disney, Pixar sign 3-movie deal

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**Drop heads (aka sub heads or deck heads) give additional information**

- Many papers use drop heads that range from 14 pts to 16 pts.
- The drop head is a complete sentence and follows all the rules of grammar.
  - Don’t condense verb phrases as you might with the main head

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**Drop heads**

- Don’t repeat key words or information in the main head.

  **Obama going to China**

  *The president also plans to visit Taiwan*
• Short stories and stories with 30 pt or smaller heads usually don’t have drop heads

Comm 332 headline style:
• Use a down style
  – capitalize only the first word and any proper nouns

  Moon to crash into Earth

Comm 332 headline style:
• Use “Headline Paragraph Style” on your InDesign documents for the correct headline font, which can be normal, bold, italic or bold italic

• Use “Drop Head Paragraph Style” on your InDesign documents for the correct font and size

  Moon to crash into Earth
  Everyone will die Tuesday at 3:18 PST

Comparing headlines

OC Register
31 July 99
ValuJet contractor enters plea

3 Defendants, Firm Plead Not Guilty in ValuJet Crash Case

Uninsured allowed to sue automakers

Car Makers Lose Ruling on Prop. 213

No evidence found of witness tampering

Whitewater Witness Wasn’t Paid, Probe Finds

Court Methods Altered for Clinton Allies

Judge sent Hubbell and Trie cases to Clinton appointees

Charges dropped against Stephens

19 Aug 99 Murder Charges Dropped in O.C. Patrolman’s Slaying

Action by PUC Alters Phone Rate Structure

Phone rates to rise, tolls to fall
Cousins’ argument to stabbing

A La Habra man is hospitalized; suspect faces in custody, police say.

By KIMBERLY EDRE

La Habra - A fight over drinking and a dispute between two cousins Monday night left one of the men in critical condition after his cousin stabbed him in front of his wife and the other behind bars, according to authorities.

What started the fight is under investigation, police said.

La Habra Police Capt. Bill Brattain on Monday night said officers responded about 9:15 p.m. to a call of a fight at a residence in the 1600 block of West 2nd Street.

On the back patio of the apartment, officers David Vasquez, 30, lying on the ground and bleeding profusely. He had been stabbed.

Vasquez's brother-in-law, Leonard Quinonez, 39, of Whittier, was treated at the scene and transported to the UCI Medical Center with non-life threatening injuries.

In October 2009, Quinonez was sentenced to five days in jail and three years probation after pleading no contest to being drunk in public.

Columbia Journalism Review’s

Lower Case