UNIT-9 : HEADLINE WRITING

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 What is a Headline?

9.3 Types of Headlines

9.4 How to write a Headline?

9.5 Grammar Rules of Headline Writing: "Do's and Don'ts"

9.6 Let Us Sum Up

9.7 Further Reading

9.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify different types of headlines
- learn how to write a headline

9.2 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A HEADLINE?

Any kind of writing, whether it is journalistic or otherwise, remains incomplete without a headline. The headline is the title or the head of a newspaper story or article usually printed in large type and gives the gist of the story or article that follows.

A headline's purpose is to quickly and briefly draw attention to the story. It is generally written by a copy editor, but may also be written by the writer, the page layout designer, or other editors.

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 theatre. Without headlines, or movie titles, the audience would be left to their own devices to figure out which movie to watch. However, with headlines, the audience are drawn to

the movies they would be most interested in. Headlines in a newspaper serve the same purpose.

Apart from that, headlines also summarize and encapsulate the news stories, as well as classify and distinguish different news stories. Different types and styles of headlines are used to identify different kinds of stories which also indicate the relative importance of news stories, thus helping the reader to decide which stories to read first, or not read at all. Headline is one of the most important elements of the newspaper page design, providing typographic relief as well. They separate stories on a page and relieve the tedium that would exist with masses of text-sized type.

9.3 TYPES OF HEADLINES

Now that we have understood what a headline is and what its basic function is, let us identify some of the common types of newspaper headlines generally used.

Banner head


EXTRA EDITION
Los Angeles Times
Terror Attack
Hijacked Jets Fly Into Trade Center, Pentagon

Banner headlines are large, heavy headlines that are run across eight columns, and placed on top of the front page of the newspaper. Banner headlines are attention grabbers. They set the tone, and are used sparingly. They are used only for those news that can be considered "earth shaking" such as the sudden fall of government; a natural calamity that claims hundreds of lives; a scientific breakthrough that can change the course of mankind; an act of criminal violence that shakes the conscience of the nation or a court judgement that can reshape the country's polity.


The Washington Post

Obama Makes History

U.S. DECISIVELY ELECTS FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT

DEMOCRATS EXPAND CONTROL OF CONGRESS

If a banner head is run above the flag or the name plate, it is known as Skyline.

A Streamer refers to the widest and biggest multicolumn headline on a page, regardless of whether it is the full width.

Cross-Line Headline


Newsline

THE WORLD TO THE RESCUE

Mayoral recall drives go viral

The cross-line headline is quite similar to a banner headline. While it is a large headline, it does not span the entire width of the page, but it does run across all the columns of the story it pertains to. The cross-line headline is one of the simplest types of headlines, consisting of a single line and one or most often more columns in width.

It can run flush on both sides of the paper or it can have the words centred over the columns. This type of headline is generally used when there is more than one column for a story and to produce a formal look.

Kicker Head

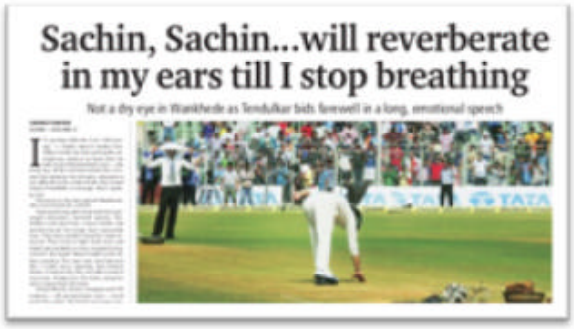
In India, they call it shoulder, and in the US they call it kicker. But in both countries the kicker or shoulder is a great help to headline writers. It provides them the extra space that they desperately need to pack meaning in headlines. The shoulder or kicker has been defined as the headline that is placed on top of the main headline. This headline is set in small points, and its purpose is to supplement the


DISPROPORTIONATE ASSETS CASE

SC refuses Jaya's plea to defer trial

main headline

Hammer or Reverse Kicker


Sachin, Sachin...will reverberate in my ears till I stop breathing

Not a dry eye in Wankhede as Tendulkar bids farewell in a long, emotional speech

It is called reverse shoulder in some Indian newspapers and reverse kicker in some others. Some Indian editors also call it a strap-line. As the name suggests, reverse kicker is the opposite of the kicker. The reverse shoulder amplifies the main news point and is used as an extra headline hook to catch the attention of the newspaper reader. The reverse shoulder is one of the most powerful headline props available to newspaper editors. It is used in almost all Indian newspapers to enlarge or amplify the main news point. The biggest advantage of the reverse shoulder is that it gives the headline writer extra space to highlight news points that cannot be covered in the main headline.

Single/Double/Multiple Line Headline

Some headlines are written in a single line, while some are written in double or multiple lines.


Five-year engineering college expansion nearly complete


Lost language found, but no one can read it

Tablets found in Portugal date back 2,500 years


San Francisco Chronicle FINAL

Japan Hit By Atom Bomb---Mightiest Weapon in History! Tokyo Admits Heavy Damage

New Epoch in Science, War

Single Missile Dropped—More Force Than 2000 B-29 Raid; Capitulation May Be Hastened

Multiply This by Two Thousand!

Flushed Head (Right/Left/Centre)

This is one of the more modern headline forms in use. It consists of two or three lines of headline, each one set flush left, right or to the centre. The design is simple and allows freedom in writing the headline. No rules govern the writing of the flush left/right headline; however a uniform style for better results is generally adopted. This type of headline is popular because it is easy to write, allows flexibility in unit count and provides a feeling of airiness to the page with the white space.


WORLD NEWS

New website addletters.com generates cool images for users, Get it while it's hot!

thebridge


Headline Treatment Options


City almost bans the saxophone

BY TOM DALTON
STAFF WRITER

SALEM — Music may soothe a savage breast, but it can drive a civilized person to distraction when it's off-key and loud.

That appears to be the lesson learned last year when a saxophone player on the Essex

Stepped and Reverse Stepped Headline

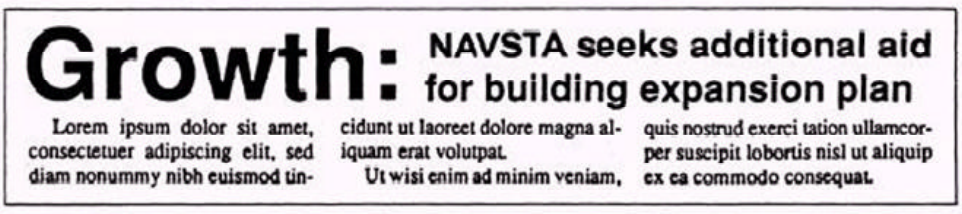
In a stepped headline format, all the lines are displayed in the form of stairs usually projecting downwards from left to right.

In the reverse stepped headline format, on the other hand, the lines are displayed in the form of stairs, the shortest line at the top and the longest line at the bottom.



Tripod Head

The tripod head is a single, short line of larger type set to the left of two lines of smaller type. The tripod portion (larger wording) should be twice the size of the definition or main headline. For example, a 36-point tripod would dictate that the main head be set in 18-point type to give the true tripod appearance. Punctuation in the form of a colon is required when the tripod conveys a separate thought.



Side Saddle

Side saddles are type of headlines which are placed 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 centred.



Standing Head

The standing head is essentially a label used for regular or recurring content, such as sports and film columns. It does not change from issue to issue.



Jump Head

The jump head is designed to help the reader find a portion of a story continued from another page. The jump head uses one or two key words from the headline that introduced the story. It is set flush left followed by the words "Continued from Page ##," usually set in boldface body type (it also can be set in italic). A two-point rule maybe used to extend from the side of

the head over the width of the article.





CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 1. What is the function of a headline?

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Q. 2. What do you mean by banner head?

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Q. 3. What is a jump head?

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9.4 HOW TO WRITE A HEADLINE?

The headline is one of the most important elements of a news story. Though headlines are often assigned at the last moment, if seen from the point of view of a reader it is the headlines that first catches one attention. Busy people usually scan the newspaper, surveying photos, headlines and cut-lines to decide if they want to commit more time to reading the stories that interest them. The photos, cut-lines and headlines are thus important decision-making points. Choosing a limited number of words to convey the

main point of an article is the key challenge when considering how to write a newspaper headline. Because newspaper headlines are limited by the space available on the printed page, word choice and clarity are crucial to a good headline.

First of all, read the news story thoroughly. You must make sure you have understood the stand of the story as well as the information it provides. To be effective, your headline must be correct (in fact and implication), it must connect to ordinary readers (be easily understood), it must attract attention by the use of interesting, active words and must set or match the tone of the article. The headline must aptly summarise the news story, sometimes within as minimum as four to five words.

Focus on the most up-to-date and important information from the story and try to understand the central idea of the story. While writing the headline for a feature story, it is suggested to find the right words from within the lead. However, you must be careful not to repeat what has already been told in the lead. Select key words from that reflect the central theme of the article.

9.5 GRAMMAR RULES OF HEADLINE WRITING

It is often said that newspaper headline writing has its own set of grammar rules. Here are a few things to bear in mind while writing a news headline:

- Use active voice
  PM declares new policy for girl child instead of
  New policy for girl child declared
- Use present tense for past events
  India beats Pakistan in World Cup final
- Use to for future events
  Sun to burn out in 6 billion years
- Use only well known abbreviations. (YMCA, NBA, NFL)
- Use full names unless the person is well known.
- Use a comma to replace the word and.
  Man poisons wife, self.

- Avoid using a semicolon in a one line head.

  Principal makes presentation; discusses attendance policy
- Avoid beginning headline with a verb.
- Leave out articles (a, an, the)

  Prime Minister hikes Alps for charity (The Prime Minister hiked the Alps)
- Do not capitalise each word; only the first word of the head.
- Do not editorialize, exaggerate, generalize or use long words. Keep it simple and direct.
- Avoid using clichés and jargons.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 4. What makes the headline effective?

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Q. 5. Why is the headline the most important element of a news story?

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9.6 LET US SUM UP

Let us sum up our unit on headline writing with the following points:

- The headline is the title or the head of a newspaper story or article usually printed in large type and gives the gist of the story or article that follows.
- A headline's purpose is to quickly and briefly draw attention to the story.
- Different types and styles of headlines are used to identify different

kinds of stories which also indicate the relative importance of news stories, thus helping the reader to decide which stories to read first, or not read at all.

- Different types of headlines include banner head, streamer, skyline, kicker, hammer, side saddle, tripod, cross line, standing head and jumping head.
- To be effective, your headline must be correct (in fact and implication), it must connect to ordinary readers (be easily understood), it must attract attention by the use of interesting, active words and must set or match the tone of the article. The headline must aptly summarise the news story, sometimes within as minimum as four to five words.



9.7 FURTHER READING

- Saxena, Sunil (2006) *Headline Writing,* SAGE Publications

1. Bleyer, Willard Grosvenor (2018) : *Newspaper Writing and Editing,* Forgotten Books, Franklin Classical Trade page.



9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No 1 : A headline's purpose is to quickly and briefly draw attention to the story. It is generally written by a copy editor, but may also be written by the writer, the page layout designer, or other editors. Apart from that, headlines also summarize and encapsulate the news stories, as well as classify and distinguish different news stories. Different types and styles of headlines are used to identify different kinds of stories which also indicate the relative importance of news stories, thus helping the reader to decide which stories to read first, or not read at all. Headline is one of the most important elements of the newspaper page design, providing typographic relief as well. They separate stories on a page and relieve the tedium that would exist with masses of text-sized type.

Ans to Q. No 2 : Banner headlines are large, heavy headlines that are run across eight columns, and placed on top of the front page of the newspaper. Banner headlines are attention grabbers. They set the tone, and are used sparingly. They are used only for those news that can be considered "earth shaking" such as the sudden fall of government; a natural calamity that claims hundreds of lives; a scientific breakthrough that can change the course of mankind; an act of criminal violence that shakes the conscience of the nation or a court judgement that can reshape the country's polity.

Ans to Q. No 3 : The jump head is designed to help the reader find a portion of a story continued from another page. The jump head uses one or two key words from the headline that introduced the story. It is set flush left followed by the words "Continued from Page ##," usually set in boldface body type (it also can be set in italic). A two-point rule maybe used to extend from the side of the head over the width of the article.

Ans to Q. No 4 : To be effective, a headline must be correct (in fact and implication), it must connect to ordinary readers (be easily understood), it must attract attention by the use of interesting, active words and must set or match the tone of the article. The headline must aptly summarise the news story, sometimes within as minimum as four to five words.

Ans to Q. No 5 : The headline is one of the most important elements of a news story. Though headlines are often assigned at the last moment, if seen from the point of view of a reader it is the headlines that first catches one attention. Busy people usually scan the newspaper, surveying photos, headlines and cut-lines to decide if they want to commit more time to reading the stories that interest them. Headlines are thus important decision-making points.



9.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q.1 : What is the importance of headline in news stories?

Q.2 : What is the difference between banner headline and picker headline?

B. Short questions (Answer each question in about 150 words):

Q. 1. What are the basic features of a Reverse Kicker?

Q. 2. “Headline writing is a special form of short writing” — Explain

C. Long questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words):

Q. 1. What are the different types of headlines? Illustrate with examples.

Q. 2. What are the things to be kept in mind while writing headlines?