

**Love at First Sight:
How to Write Headlines
That Make Readers Swoon**



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Chapter 1: Making the Case

Headlines and titles are, at first glance, often overlooked when it comes to learning how to write. When teaching how to write, schools focus on the structure, grammar, organization, word choice, and ability to communicate over other aspects of writing. These same skills are expanded upon in colleges and universities (unless of course you happen to be studying journalism, advertising, or marketing). Being able to make a convincing argument supported by facts and citations is the public's general understanding of what it means to be a good writer.

That's definitely not a bad thing. In fact, it's great that our society tries to train citizens to be logical, fact-driven writers, and respects those who are.

But, when you sit down and think about the most impactful pieces of text that affect you day in and day out, you'll be surprised. It's not the well-organized five-paragraph piece that tells you why you should vote for someone. It's not the caption under a photo that convinces you

to think a certain way. It's not the closing paragraphs of an interesting article that grab your attention.

It's the pitch, the hook, the heading, the slogan, the title.

Ultimately, it's the headline.

Really? Those roughly 5-12 word lines are the most impactful pieces of text throughout my day? Yes, really, it's the headline or title (and for this guide's purpose, these terms are interchangeable). But before we delve into the details of headlines and titles there's a small detour we'd like to take, to help you reflect on your connection to headlines.

A History of Headlines

One could argue that our history is written in the headlines. It's not as if we remember the seemingly endless paragraphs of our grade school history textbooks. We remember the big, important facts that got us to where we are today. A simple line of text can, in an instant, bring back feelings and memories we have experienced individually as well as collectively.

Take for example, this headline:

“U.S. Under Attack”

It's safe to say that you knew right away exactly what that headline is about. It was used in the San Francisco Chronicle immediately after the events of September 11, 2001. Reading just three simple words can bring back all of the fear, anxiety, anger, confusion, and sadness that we all experienced on that day. Three words elicit the feelings of an entire day and can almost transport you back to a memory that would take thousands of words to describe.

“Shuttle explodes; survivors unlikely”

Here's another case of four words causing a rush of memories and emotions. Even if you weren't alive during the 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, you've likely

“*Writers should give great care to their composition of a headline.*”

Jakob Nielson

been exposed to the story. Either way, this headline brings up memories and feelings that you felt during that day in 1986, or in 2001.

Hope leading to disaster, sadness, and anger. All

from four words. Even if you weren't around for either event, you immediately have an idea, a feeling, about what went through peoples' minds and hearts when they read that.

You could say that our memories operate much like a headline. We remember events that we have experienced or learned about using concise and to-the-point mental labels. Most of us don't remember the intricate details of events, we remember where we were and we remember feelings and reactions.

There are many examples of pivotal events in the past and there will be countless more. But it's not just through the news that headlines draw out and capture our emotions; daily advertising also uses headlines to connect directly to our emotions.

Your Life: Sloganized

Advertisers are skilled in finding ways to connect with people in a very short period of time. Companies toil for hours upon hours on company and brand slogans. Really what they are doing is designing a headline, one that will connect to you, the consumer.

Companies of all types and sizes rely on advertising to generate sales. That's a simple fact of business. But what their advertisements rely on is the ability to reach you in a way that stirs basic emotions and desires.

One the best examples of this is from Adidas:

“Impossible is nothing”

With this clever headline, it's almost impossible not to inspire people, especially when it's coupled with video and audio. Just take a moment to think about what "Impossible is nothing" means to you. Think about your gut responses upon reading it.

It's motivational, it makes you want to accomplish your dreams, it makes you want to say, "Yes! Impossible IS nothing!" I'm going to do this thing that I want to do, whatever it is! And of course, Adidas wants you to follow that up with "by buying Adidas!"

Other famous slogans (remember, these are essentially headlines) reach us in the same way. Nike's "Just do it," The US Army's "Be all that you can be" and the US Marines' "The few. The proud. The Marines." come to mind. They call on your desire to be better than you are right now, they offer a way to do that, valid or not. Regardless if they can fulfill their promises, we react strongly to these headlines, often personalizing them immediately to fit our views or desires.

There are other areas in which advertisers reach out to us in very human ways with very few words. Car companies focus on very different emotions and desires than the military or clothing companies do. They play on our desire for luxury, status, power, and independence. They get to those parts of

our psyche with surprisingly few words, too. Take for example, Porsche and BMW.

"Porsche, There is No Substitute"
"The Ultimate Driving Machine"

Both immediately connect to you as a reader. You think, "Man, if I have that Porsche or BMW I'll really have something special. There's nothing quite like x car or y car, I wish I could have one of those!" Even though you know deep down that there are hundreds of that same model, and it's ultimately not that unique. You are still influenced to think more highly of a product by just a few words.

When you really think about it, all of advertising hinges on the headline. Without it, none of their images and none of their audio really matter. There won't be a connection strong enough to make you interested.

Why Headlines are Vital To Copywriting

So, we know how much a few words can affect a normal person. But what does that mean for those of us writing content for the internet?

It means everything.

Tony Hetherington, in an article titled [Why Headlines Are So Important](#),

explained this clearly when he wrote, “The headline is the most important part of any piece of writing - whether it is an article, newsletter, sales copy, blog entry, web page, email, or business report.”

While there might be an argument to be made for other types of writing, this is 100% true for writing on the internet. It doesn't get any clearer than that.

If the headline isn't good, no one will read your copy. If no one reads your copy, what's the point in writing it?

Think about it. There are hundreds of millions of websites and articles all over the web. There's no way that people could read through everything that's posted, even if they wanted to. The way you get people to read or visit a site is through a headline.

The headline is really the reason anything gets read on the internet. People don't log on to the internet with the purpose of reading articles. They hop on to news sites, entertainment sites, or sites that are interesting to them. They spend a few seconds looking around, keeping an eye out for new content. How do we get from briefly checking a site to spending 5-10 minutes or more reading an article?

We get there in a matter of seconds, when someone reads a headline so good

“*My God... what are the headlines going to be like on Monday if the Yankees don't make the playoffs?*”

Wade Boggs

that it triggers their brain to say, “This sounds interesting, I want to know more.” This decision takes probably 1-3 seconds to make. ” That's all the time you have as a writer to get someone to read your work. It's unfortunate for writers of course, but it's the reality of how people browse the web. We're all guilty of browsing that way, whether we like to admit it or not.

If You Need More Convincing...

The folks at [KISSMetrics](#) remind us that Drayton Bird, one of the best direct marketers in the world, advises “spending 80% of your time writing your headline.” If the headline isn't going to get your copy read, it doesn't matter how much time or effort you put into your copy.

The wise writers at KISSMetrics go even further to say that, “learning to write great headlines is more important than mastering every other copywriting trick combined.” Take a moment to read that to yourself again. You could even read it one more time. In fact, this is so important I'm going to write it again just

so you have to read it again: “learning to write great headlines is more important than mastering every other copywriting trick combined.”

Hopefully that sinks in with you. It’s an important lesson, and the entire premise of this guide.

Once you have labored on your headline and come up with one you are satisfied with, then and only then are the rest of your skills of copywriting or writing online important. It’s also very important to realize that writing online is VERY different than traditional print copy and writing. The same rules don’t apply, nor do the same tools apply to getting people to read your articles or generate interest in your product.

So if you’re interested in learning how to write excellent headlines and titles, read on. There’s a lot more you need to know.

Chapter 2: So You Want to Know How to Write Headlines?

Given how much the importance of headlines has been trumped up in the last chapter, you’d think you would need a whole book rather than a guide to know how to write a good headline. The truth of the matter is, you can become a talented headline writer without investing hundreds of hours into reading books and boring advertising studies. Whether you can craft headlines quickly becomes a matter of hours upon hours of practice. But if you’re writing for a living, you should have plenty of time for practice.

Before we delve into the basics of writing great headlines for the web, we have to remember an important point.

Writing headlines for the internet is far different than writing a headline or title for a book, newspaper, or advertisement. Sure, they still share the same purpose - to get attention - but online the headline is the *only* thing the reader has a chance to be interested in. Flash graphics and videos might get their attention, but if the headline isn’t good, they won’t click. Genuine, immediate curiosity and interest has to be created by a few

words. Sometimes we have to throw some “rules” of writing out the window. Writing a headline is about being effective, not about being proper.

So let’s get started with some ways to improve your abilities as a master headline crafter!

7 Basic Rules to Improve Your Headline Writing

Sean D’Souza over at [Wordtracker](#) has an excellent metaphor when it comes to understanding headlines: “Your doorway is your headline.” That is to say, the best way for someone to come across your content is direct and obvious: through the front door.

There’s a lot behind that metaphor and hopefully these 7 basic rules will help you create the best doorway to your content that you can.

#1: Keep it Simple

This is probably the most important rule to remember when crafting headlines. Headlines have one goal, as plenty of writers on the web will tell you. The goal is to get readers to read the first sentence. Nothing more, nothing less.

“*Writing headlines is a speciality - there are outstanding writers who will tell you they couldn’t write a headline to save their lives.*”

Bill Walsh

Something with one clear goal doesn’t need to be complicated. You’ve only got seconds to convince someone that your headline is worth clicking on and reading. You don’t have time for something like,

“Here’s The Best Way to Make Lots of Money on the Internet Without Leaving Your Chair”

Now there’s a headline that is far from simple. It’s pretty easy to simplify though. Something as easy as “Make Money on the Internet, Never Leave Home.” That’s still a little wordy for a headline, but you can see the effectiveness of simplifying. You can even simply say, “The Best Way to Make Money Online.”

#2: Write Your Headline First (or Last)

Internet writers have been debating the importance of writing your headlines first, or writing them last, since the craft has been around. Quite frankly, it depends on what kind of writer you are. The pros at [Copyblogger](#) insist you should “always write your headline first,” because a headline is a promise, and you shouldn’t have to “reverse engineer” a promise.

There’s definitely merit and plenty of reasons why writing your headline first

helps make your headline a good one, but you can also write your headline last. Joanna Wiebe at KISSMetrics [explains](#), “you should write *a* headline first, but don’t put pressure on yourself to write *the* headline first.”

Basically, her approach has you draft a rough headline, in simple terms, that explains what you want to accomplish or offer with your copy. Then when you have finished the writing, you can create the real attention grabbing headline.

Practice both to find which is more comfortable to you. No rule is 100% set in stone; sometimes breaking the rules can be effective, and sometimes it won’t be for you.

[#3: Make an Intriguing Offer or a Promise](#)

A headline is useless unless it provides a clear and concise offer or promise. Additionally, adding an offer or promise makes it more attractive to a person. Curiosity and desire immediately jump into affect when someone reads a headline like:

“Lose 10 Pounds With This Weight Loss Secret”

This is a very clear headline that tells the reader exactly what their attention is going to give them. You offer the knowledge for their time, and they learn how to lose 10 pounds. A person will

immediately know whether learning this information is something they are interested in or not. If the headline is confusing or lacks a clear offer, people browsing the web are going to overlook it. It’s as simple as that.

[#4: Write a Lot of Headlines](#)

As mentioned before, whether you write your headline first or last, you’re going to need to write a lot of headlines. The best headline writers on the web admit to spending as much time crafting their headlines as their article—or even more. Once again this goes back to the importance of a great headline.

When thinking of your headline, write down everything that comes to mind. Don’t mind if it’s horrible or the best thing you’ve ever written, get it all down. It’s going to take a little bit of time to find the headline that works best, but writing down everything that comes to mind allows you to tweak and change a lot of different options.

When you finally settle on the best headline, save the whole list. It will come in handy if you ever write something similar or need help brainstorming new headlines.

[#5: Be Specific](#)

This rule ties in well with rule #3. Being vague will make people gloss over your headline and continue whatever they are doing. Being specific is hugely

important. To quote Joanna Wiebe again, “Specific and concrete facts ... - particularly ones that form pictures in our minds - are intensely interesting.”

Including numbers, percentages, and multiples are great ways to add specificity to your headline. Something like “Improve Your Reading Speed With New Program” can go from mediocre to much higher quality by adding a percentage or multiplier like this:

“Double Your Reading Speed With This New Program” or “Improve Your Reading Speed by 200% With 1 Simple Trick”

Or - “Make Money Online” vs. “Make \$102.83 Online Every Day”

See the difference a tiny bit of specificity makes? It’s quite significant when you need to grab readers’ attention, fast.

[#6: Appeal to Emotions and a Little Bit of Curiosity](#)

Emotions and the irrational side of the human brain are vital to tap into when crafting great headlines. Those few seconds when we decide whether a headline is interesting or not is dominated by instinctual and emotional reaction.

A simple example would be this headline: “Command Respect the

Moment You Walk in the Door”

That headline plays on a variety of emotions - greed, desire to be liked or respected, and curiosity as well. Copyblogger has by far the [best article](#) on why emotions are important to headlines. Ultimately, if you can appeal to greed, fear, pain, love, or a feeling of belonging in your headline, it will become even more persuasive.

[#7: Target the Right Audience](#)

“You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can’t please all of the people all of the time.”

You certainly can’t please everyone online all of the time, nor should you try. This applies to headlines as well. If you try to craft a headline for 100% of the internet, you’re going to fail. Keep in mind who your audience is and what sort of techniques or methods will catch their attention best. If you’re writing an article about business you don’t want to have a headline that doesn’t mention business terms. If you’re writing about a weight loss product it would be silly to write a headline that doesn’t play on peoples’ desire to lose pounds.

[8 Common Headlines That People Can’t Resist](#)

“*Every headline is a potential song.*”

Phil Ochs

Now that you have a basic understanding of the rules and reasons behind making a great headline, you need to learn a little bit about the more

formulaic ones. Why not just make up all of your own headlines? Because, a lot of work and research has gone into what headlines work the best, and quite frankly, if it's not broke, don't fix it.

There are many similarly structured headlines that you run across on the web because they work and they work well. There's nothing wrong with using them as a jumping off point for your own headlines.

So without further ado, 8 common types of headlines!

The How-To Headline

The “How to” headline is one of the most basic headlines you can make. It's also one of the most effective headlines. It's easy for these kinds of headlines to grab attention because people are looking for the answer to something. They are using the web to find information they often don't have. Think about when you need to find information. You will often literally type in “how to do x or y.” A headline

as simple as: “How to Make Money Online” does the trick.

You don't necessarily even need the word “to” in your how to headline either. For example: “How I Doubled My Revenue with Content Marketing” works just as well as “How to Double Your Revenue with Content Marketing.”

“The Command” headline

This headline is a little similar to the “How to” headline above. It's effective because people like to be told what to do. They read a command and think, “yes, that is a good idea,” or “yeah, I can (or want to) do that!”

For example: “Earn More Money Now!” “Become a YouTube Star in 30 Days,” “Eat More and Lose Weight!” “Turn Your Business Around in a Week or Less!” These are full of initiative and momentum.

The Testimonial

Testimonial headlines are simple to craft. The idea is exactly as it sounds. You use a testimonial to generate interest in the headline. You can use a real, honest testimonial as well as simply turning a headline into a testimonial by putting quotes around it.

Examples: “I Lost 20 pounds in 2 weeks with xyz program, you can too!” “Hands down the highest quality xyz for the best prices,” “I haven't looked this good

in 10 years!” These are personal and energetic.

“The New(s)” Headline

Making an announcement is a great way to grab readers’ attention. Their curiosity will be immediately piqued! Our desire to know about new things or events is a pretty powerful one and it shows in the research.

Some examples of news headlines:

“Finally, the secret to a long life is revealed!” “Now you can command your gadgets with only your voice” “Brand new workout program helps shed pounds.”

“The List” Headline

List headlines are probably right behind How to headlines in terms of effectiveness. Providing a concrete number of steps or items in a headline gives it more credibility in our mind. We think, “Wow they know this many reasons or this many ways to do this? They must know their stuff!” It can also hint at how quick and easy the topic can be for readers.

For example: “7 Tips for Six-Pack Abs”

When it comes to more examples, our own Content Equals Money Blog has plenty: “37 Ideas for Your Social Media” “7 Things Your Social Media Should Do Every Day,” “20 Ways To Write Kick-Butt Titles for Your Blog.”

“Ask An Interesting Question” Headline

This type of headline is another very effective one and gives you as a writer a lot of creative leeway. We’re naturally inclined to want answers to questions, even if they aren’t our own questions. Setting up a headline with a question is like giving someone half of a thought - they want that thought to be completed; they want the answer, so they click the article.

Examples: “Do You Make These 7 Common English Mistakes in Your Writing?” “Tired of Waking Up Feeling Groggy? The Answer to a Good Night’s Sleep,” “How Do You Know If You’re Earning the Wage you Deserve?” “How Can I Get More from My Workout?”

“The Secret” Headline

The secret headline isn’t really a secret. You just use the power of a secret or the hint of a secret to seduce your readers into wanting to know more.

Examples: “The Five Most Important Foods to Gain Muscle Fast” - despite not using the word “secret” this headline alludes to a solution the reader doesn’t know by using “most important.” “The 9 Secret Fashion Tips Celebrities Don’t Want You to Know!” “The Secret to Making Money at Home.”

“The Best” Headline

Unfortunately this headline isn’t “the

best,” most effective headline you can use. It’s called “the best headline” because it takes advantage of our desire to have the best, know the best, or be the best. It works surprisingly well.

Synonyms work in this situation as well. Even people who might know a thing or two about whatever you are writing will be intrigued to see if you actually know the best way to do something or if you found the best product for this or that.

Examples: “The Best Exercise for Stronger Arms,” “The Ultimate Guide to Bargain Shopping,” “XYZ Company’s Finest Wine On Sale Now.”

Of course, this isn’t the be-all end-all of headline lists. There are plenty of variations to even these 8 simple headline styles. Plus, there are many different kinds of headlines you can use. But these 8 headlines are a solid foundation for improving your own headline creation. Continue to work at it and keep some of those basic motivations for why people click on headlines in mind when crafting your own.

Headline Tips

- Use the active voice.
 - You may start a headline with a number; if the number is below 10, write it in numeral form.
 - Write all headlines flush left unless specified otherwise.
 - Use present tense for immediate past information, past tense for information more than a week old, and future tense for events in the future.
 - Only use periods for abbreviations.
 - Don’t start a headline with a verb.
-

Chapter 3: Headlines in Action and What to Avoid

So you've got a pretty good basic understanding of how to craft headlines for the web. You might be wondering what some of the cream of the crop of headlines look like out on the web. Well, here's your chance to take a look at some of the best REAL headlines on the web or off.

9 Irresistible Headlines You Can Learn From

First up is a classic headline that has been changed around a great deal over the years.

"They Laughed When I Sat Down At the Piano But When I Started to Play! -"

This headline can be modified to fit almost any industry. It connects with lot of human desires - to impress, to have admirable skills, to prove people wrong.

"No time for Yale — took college home," says well-known author"

This headline is powerful in that it pulls on the desire for people to associate with prestigious places, but accomplish the same things from their own comfort zone. The bit about the author provides a secret or question to be answered and additional credibility to the headline.

"Advice to Wives Whose Husbands

Don't Save Money"

This is straightforward and simple. Perfect formula for a good headline. Plus, the author obviously knew who his audience was and went straight for them in a clear, specific manner with this headline.

"How to Win Friends and Influence People"

Dale Carnegie penned this one. It remains one of the most attractive headlines ever.

"Can You Pass the Memory Test?"

Here's a great example of a question headline. It's simple, straightforward and quick to read.

It also generates a lot of curiosity and is directed to the reader. It's as if you're challenging them, and it works to get their interest and hold it.

"Free book tells you 12 secrets of better lawn care"

Here's a prime example of a secret headline. Simple, specific, and intriguing. It makes you want to find out more about this book - and per the headline, it won't cost you anything to get that info.

“ According to some of the best copywriters of all time, you should spend half of the time it takes to write a piece of persuasive content on the headline.

”

Copyblogger

“The lazy man’s way to riches”

Here’s a headline that follows the “how to” style without using the words “how to.” Using the word “way” implies directions, steps to get rich. Plus, people like to get things for little or no work, especially money. You can bet this was a successful headline.

“Why some people almost always make money in the stock market”

This is a great example of a headline that uses some choice words. “Some” and “Almost always” give this headline credibility. Why? Because everyone knows no man ALWAYS makes money in the stock market. That would be ridiculous. Without the words “some” and “almost” people will gloss over this headline as they think to themselves “yeah right.” Really, try reading it that way: “Why People Always Make Money in the Stock Market.” Any impact? Didn’t think so.

“At last! A steam iron with a ‘Magic Brain’”

Here’s an example of a news headline. Besides the “newness” factor, this headline really hits at a person’s desire to know just what the heck a “magic brain” is and what it does for a steam iron.

There are lots of great headlines out there, and there is always room for more. Want to write great headlines? Learn what to avoid!

Avoid These 7 Mistakes to Create Solid Headlines Nearly Every Time

It can be useful to know what you should do to write great headlines. But it’s also incredibly useful to know what you need to avoid for good headlines. The following are the major mistakes you need to avoid when crafting your own headlines and titles.

Using the same formula too much - This is a big no-no. If ten of your blog posts or articles are all titled “How to Do X to Get Y,” readers are going to get bored, and fast. If you like stock headlines, vary your usage of them and throw in some of your own to keep things interesting.

Vagueness - In general, the more specific your headline, the more effective it’s going to be. The difference between “Why Content Marketing is Vital,” “Why Content Marketing is Vital to Increasing Sales” and “How Content Marketing Can Increase Sales by 53%” is vast.

Long Headlines - Writing headlines that are over 10-14 words can be pushing the limits of an attractive headline. Plus it tends to lead you away from being targeted and specific with your word choice. That’s not to say you should *never* write long headlines. If one works, great. But for the most part, it’s best keep things short.

Assumptions about your audience -If you make assumptions about what your audience knows or believes, you won't be as effective. If you do, you're more prone to make a complex or vague headline. The only assumption you should make is to assume your audience knows little if anything. Your headline got them to the article because they want to learn more.

Being clever - If you're trying to be clever with your headline using plays on words or other techniques, you're not being simple and specific. This might occasionally work if you know your audience is going to read your work already, but to attract browsers, best to avoid the urge to be clever.

Irrelevant information - Don't include any information you don't need in your headline. People don't care how they or how you get them to the results or promise of your offer, they care about the actual results. Leave the details out of the headline—save them for the copy if you must have them.

Investing Little Time - This is probably one of the most important things to avoid when crafting headlines. If you don't put in a respectable amount of time making your headlines, you won't get the best results you can. Headlines require a good deal of effort and they are worth every minute (or hour) you spend on them.

Prepare to Laugh - 9 Examples of Headline Failures

No guide would be complete without some mention of what happens when things go wrong. Here's a short list of some gems, found on the web and off, and why they are no good.

To start things off, Bill Mitchell has some great examples and structures that just don't work in his Guide to Writing Headlines on [Poynter](#).

"This Moses wrote the bible on Jeeps"
A play on someone's name is usually not a great idea. Especially when it comes to sensitive subjects.

"The Pear Facts about Anjous"
Despite being clever, this lacks any specificity and could in fact incite confusion rather than interest.

"Rail plan is ...on track, off the track, at a crossroads, going downhill, going uphill, moving at full throttle, or huffing and puffing like the little engine that could"

Sure these might be creative, but they aren't going to generate hits. It doesn't send any concrete information to the reader, nor does it send any semblance of an offer as to why the rail plan is important to the reader or not.

“Couples in the real estate game betting on pairs”

The only reaction out of this from a reader might be a, “What!?” Even if you are part of a couple and interested in real estate there’s nothing in this headline to make you say “I want to read this.”

One of the most recent examples of a failed headline came from ESPN in February of 2012.

“Chink in the Armor: Jeremy Lin’s 9 Turnovers Cost Knicks in Streak-stopping Loss to Hornets”

Here’s a prime example of a play on words turning ugly faster than any has before. The [headline](#) cost the writer his job, as well as causing a huge reputation hit for ESPN, probably the largest brand in sports.

Lastly, the traditional source of headlines, newspapers, have provided millions of headlines throughout the years. Sometimes just the idea of a bad headline in a newspaper is enough for fake headlines to convince us they’re real. Some wonderfully well-thought out real and fake headlines are listed below.

“Red tape holds up new Platte River bridge”

Informative and specific, yet I think

“*You can write a headline in an infinite number of ways. However, certain types of headlines have proven themselves repeatedly for many years.*”

Dean Rieck

motorists might be worried to learn that some [red tape](#) is keeping the bridge together.

“Kids Make Nutritious Snacks”

While unable to verify the source of this headline, many people cite it on the Internet. Regardless, as a headline it suffers from no specificity, and makes you want to say, “So what?” and move on. It also means that eating a kid makes for a nutritious snack.

“Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers”

While not attributable to any real newspaper this is a fine example of a specific, straightforward headline. This is also an example of poor word choice. Hopefully no jaywalkers were run down by the police and injured.

Lastly, one headline that we don’t care whether it’s made up or not:

“Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says”

Really?

Chapter 4: Powerful Resources, Tips to Remember, Questions to Ask Yourself, and More

As you begin to master the types of headlines discussed already in this guide, you will likely start to crave ideas for new headlines. Part of the fun is figuring out headlines on your own that work. If you know the reasoning behind what makes a headline good, you don't necessarily need new formulas to make headlines, but they can help in a pinch.

Plus there are other areas where the rules and reasons behind headlines come into play. Maybe you're wondering how the skills in crafting headlines apply to e-mail or Twitter. It's always good to have a few resources to go to when it comes to expanding your headline skills, no matter the medium.

Expand Your Headline Skills with these Excellent Resources

[Headlines](#)

Want to find examples of even more creative and effective headlines? Well the internet is full of examples to help you take your headline writing to a

new level. Brian Clark, founder of Copyblogger (a wonderful resource in general) has some excellent articles devoted headlines and formulas for headlines. The first, [7 More Sure-Fire Headline Templates That Work](#) has great examples of headlines you can experiment with to further your headline writing skills. The [second article](#), has 10 more formulas that are a welcome addition to any headline writer's book.

Brian Clark also has a wonderful article on the importance of being ultra-specific. He even backed up his claims with marketing tests to show that "an optimized headline increased website conversion rates by 73%." Wow! Be sure to [find out](#) how.

[Twitter](#)

If you're looking to extend the skills you've learned in headline writing to Twitter, and social media, you're in luck. Many of the same principles apply, but with certain rules becoming more important than others. Basically the importance of being specific in a concise way becomes paramount. For more information, head to another great [resource](#) by Brian Clark.

[Email](#)

Direct e-mailing is a vibrant way to conduct content marketing and communicate with customers. A large percentage of internet users use the internet solely for e-mail.

The art of headlines applies just as much for E-mail as it does for any article on the web. The right headline will ensure your e-mail is opened. In addition, the e-mail signature offers a chance for one more headline that serves as a call-to-action.

A great [read](#) on the importance of e-mail subjects can be found at Copyblogger. Basically there are four fundamental parts of the subject line which are completely related to what makes a good headline. An E-mail must be: useful, ultra-specific (with these two taking priority over the next two), unique, and urgent. Make sure you check out the rest of the resource to find out all of the nitty-gritty details.

When it comes to closing your email, signatures are a great opportunity to pitch another call-to-action or spread awareness about your site or what you have to offer. Don't let that opportunity go to waste. Read [this](#) article to learn from Sean D'Souza's highly detailed guide to turning an e-mail signature into a conversion creating headline.

Tips to Remember

As you near the end of this guide, it's important to keep in mind some tips. You can use this section as a nice mini-guide to getting your head in the right place for thinking up headlines.

So, in no particular order, here are the best tips to remember when crafting your headlines:

- Do your research.
- Be specific.
- Be clear.
- Be useful.
- Be simple. Very simple.
- Create a sense of urgency, uniqueness, or any other effective emotion.
- Find the central idea, promise, or offer and focus on that.
- Write lots of headlines. Then write even more headlines until you craft the best one.
- Deliver a complete message.
- Use words like some, almost, and always to add credibility.
- Question words don't have to make a headline a question.
- Focus on benefits to your readers, not features that make the product or service great.
- Find out who your audience is and tailor the headline to them.
- Provide a complete message.
- Use numbers instead of words.
- Headline rules can be broken if it makes sense.

“*Think about a Twitter stream. ...it's time to up your headline game.*”

Brian Clark

It's a great idea to read over these tips every time you sit down to write headlines. Having these rules on hand or fresh in your memory will help you in your quest to find the perfect headline for each piece.

Questions to Ask Yourself

It's very important when writing headlines to put the time in on the front end. That way you'll be able to make the best headlines you can for a specific piece. So far this guide has focused on generating effective headlines from the beginning stage. However, evaluating your work afterwards is also very important.

Making sure that your headline and your content jive together is very important. Does your content satisfy the promise or offer of your headline? No? If it doesn't, readers are going to be turned off and they likely will not finish reading once they realize the disconnect.

Asking questions like the one above about your headline and your finished work is a great way to check on the quality of the headline. It's also a great way to determine if it will be impactful to folks browsing the web. Lastly, it's a great way to evaluate anything you've finished to make sure it accomplishes what it was planned to accomplish.

The following is a list of questions you can and should ask yourself when it comes to critiquing your headlines. You don't have to answer "yes" to every one in order to have a good headline. But if you find your negative answers outweighing your positive answers, you might want to take a second look at your headline.

- Does your headline generate interest in the reader?
- Is your headline composed of a mix of short, specific, and powerful words?
- Would you want to read the article behind your headline, and not because you wrote it?
- Does your headline offer a reward for reading?
- Does your headline address your audience?
- Does your headline need to have keywords? If so, are they utilized properly?
- Does your headline elicit an emotion that spurs action?
- Would your headline benefit from more specificity or a proposed transaction?
- Does your headline cause a sense of urgency that demands satisfaction?

While this is not an all-inclusive list of the questions you should ask yourself, they are most of the effective ones. If you answer them honestly about your

headline you will have a great barometer of the quality of your headline. You also might realize quickly that you need to put a little more time into the headline.

Exercises to Improve Your Headlines

If you're looking to practice crafting

headlines outside of actual writing projects, you have some options. You could of course sit down and simply write headlines for any sort of topic or imaginary assignment that comes to mind. That's not even a bad idea either. In fact, it's quite effective in itself.

“*The goal of the headline is to stop readers cold and draw them into your post. You can't do that if you use confusing headlines.*”

SEOMoz

You can also try a variety of headline writing exercises to improve your skills.

5-5-5

Take 5 minutes to write as many headlines about a story or topic as you can. Follow that up with 5 minutes of editing the headlines you've created. Then, take the remaining five minutes to perfect one or two of the headlines as best you can. This is a great way to keep the mind on its toes and work on creativity.

100 exercise

Pick a single topic or project. Write 100 headlines about the very same thing. This will test and improve your ability to come up with creative ways to alter headlines to make them as effective as possible.

Publication Practice

Find 3-5 publications or articles on the web or in a newspaper. Then write 5 or more headlines for each one. Try to make them better than the real headline. You'll be amazed how much benefit you get out of tweaking a headline for a single article.

Rename

Think about your favorite books or stories. Now, give them headlines instead of titles. It might seem weird at first, but turn those stories into real life in your head and make headlines out of the events or main story arc. This helps develop creativity and can also help you get through writing blocks when it comes to crafting headlines.

Read

Simply spend time reading and analyzing headlines you find on the web or during the course of your day. Ask yourself the questions from the above section and figure out which headlines are the most effective and why.

1 Word

If you've created a headline or have examples of headlines, try changing one word of it to turn it into a more effective headline. This will help improve your word choice and understanding of what makes a headline effective or not.

These exercises will help you improve all of your headline writing skills. Ultimately though, the best way to improve your headline crafting abilities is to spend time consistently writing, reading, and editing headlines. It doesn't matter if you only do it for actual work, through exercises, or a combination of both. The more experience you get the better you will become.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

So you've come to the end of this guide and you are now a professional headline writer. Okay, at least a much improved writer. Until you really take the time to think about headlines and the impact they have, you don't realize how important they are to your success as a writer.

Oftentimes writers are not only writing for themselves though. When you write for the Internet you are often writing for a company or business, especially in the world of content marketing. In order to serve them best, your headlines need to be top notch. Good headlines will create conversions. That's a fact. They will create many more conversions than a headline thrown together by someone who has never taken the time to make, read, or study a guide like this. Expanding your understanding of headlines is vital for writing on the internet.

It's important to bring up a research-based statistic mentioned earlier, which came from Brian Clark:

“An optimized headline increased website conversion rates by 73%.”

It's one thing to have increased traffic due to a well-designed headline. It's a

game-changer to have a headline that can increase your conversion rates by 73%. Applying the skills and knowledge in this guide and in the many other resources linked in this guide will do wonders for whoever benefits from your final product as a writer.

If you're a business owner or simply write for your own business or blog, you should now understand how important it is to take headlines seriously. The right headlines make an impact on the bottom line in a very real and verifiable way.

If you run a business or write for one, do you utilize the power of the internet to reach consumers? When content marketing is done properly, it is all but guaranteed to increase traffic and conversions.

If you are using the web extensively for your content marketing and outreach, are your writers skilled in the art of headline writing? Do they take the time to ensure their headlines are going to generate conversions? You should ask yourself this as a writer and a businessperson in order to get the best results out of your investment.

The Internet has turned a lot of industries on their heads. The days when traditional marketing reigned supreme are over thanks to the web. Writers, businesses, and people need to adapt to these changes or they will start lagging behind.

Marketing with the art of headlines is (and has been for quite some time) entering a new world with new rules. Knowing the importance of headlines in this new world is an important step for success as the influence of the Internet continues to grow.

About

Content Equals Money is a content writing service that serves a wide variety of clients with top-shelf, sharable content. We cater to SEO marketing agencies as well as small business, providing content marketing strategies applicable to many fields. Whether you need content for yourself or content for your clients, Content Equals Money is the insource writing service to suit your needs!

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