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## What Your Readers Want… Step by Step

# Headline Writing Guide

If you're ever at a loss for headline ideas, keep this blueprint handy at all times. Whether you're looking for a starting point for your articles, blog posts, emails or even sales pages, this will make it easier to get there.

## How You Start Things Out Is Crucial: Headlines Matter

Think about how your prospects and customers receive your messages. The headline (or title, subject line, etc.) is the first thing they see and what inspires them to read more, click through, open up…in other words…take action. You have just a few seconds to make an impression, so you've got to get it right.

Exactly how you do it will depend on the medium you're using, but let's start with some…

## Basic Headline Tips:

These are general headline tips, but for specifics on the type of content you're writing for, move onto the next sections. You'll get more specific advice there.

**Capitalize:** Generally speaking, Capitalize the first letter of all the words in your headline and make it nice and big and bold to ensure it gets immediate attention.

**Focus on Your Target Customer/Reader:** Think about your target customer, what problems and desires they have and make that the focus of your headline. Forget about "We sell xyz" or "I know abc" – your reader wants to know what's in it for her/him.

**Make a Promise:** Make an enticing promise to your reader that is fulfilled by reading the your content or sales page (and ultimately, following through on your call-to-action).

**Observe:** Look at websites, brochures, blogs, articles and sales copy and see what grabs your attention. This is one of the best ways to improve your headline writing abilities.

**Be Specific:** Tell your readers exactly what to expect by reading your articles, blog post or sales page. Adding numbers and other specific wording can make your headline much more powerful.

> **Ex.** Being vague and saying things like "reduce eye puffiness" may grab some attention but telling them how easy it is; "a dab of cream once a day for 6 days"… that's something people will say hey, I could do that.
>
> Or in an article, what do you think gets more attention?: "Tips for Winning at Poker" or "8 Easy-to-Follow Strategies to Improve Your Poker Game in the Next 5 Minutes". The second is more specific and much more interesting.

**Save it until Later:** If you're having trouble writing your headline, finish the rest of your copy first and then come back to it. Oftentimes, the headline becomes more clear after you know the full direction your copy is taking.

**Keep it Simple:** There are some highly-skilled and popular writers that have written some amazing long headlines, but most of us just don't have those skills. Keep your headlines focused on one idea and say it as concisely as you can.

**Use Subheadlines:** Subheadlines are mini-headlines throughout your content. They break up your content and make it easy to read. If someone is scanning, it's less likely that all the tiny print is going to make him stop and read, but if you have an attention-getting sub-headline, it's easy to get them to stop in their tracks and pay attention.

## 1. Article Titles / Headlines:

*Type of Content:* Articles that you publish on your website, distribute to article directories and other content sites.

*Tip #1:* This type of content usually requires more descriptive headlines and is often put together in conjunction with keyword research. This is the content that people usually find by entering keywords in a search engine, searching an article directory, etc.  That said, don't simply write your headlines for search engines, they need to be interesting to your human visitors.

*Tip #2:* **If keywords are important to your project**, you may want to reverse some subject lines and put the keywords at the beginning. Ex. "Top 10 Ways to Improve Your Cholesterol Level" becomes "Improve Your Cholesterol Level - Top 10 Ways for Faster Results"

*Here are some article headline templates:* Use these as guidelines only. Because you

are looking for descriptive headlines, your article topics will often help you come up with the right headline/title for your article.

- How to _____
- Top [insert number] Ways to _____
- Top [insert number] Reasons to _____
- Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About _____
- _____ - Things to Consider
- _____ - The [insert number] Must-Have Secrets to Make It Happen
- [insert number] Crucial Steps to _____
- [insert number] Mistakes to Avoid When _____
- How to _____ in [insert number] Easy Steps
- How to _____ Even if _____
- _____ - Do It Right the First Time
- [insert number] Things You Need to Know About _____ Before You

  _____
- How to Get Your _____ Back on Track
- How to Get _____ in Less Than [insert time period]
- [insert number] Secrets to _____
- What _____ Don't Want You to Know About _____
- Making Sense of _____
- [insert number] Important Reasons Why _____
- [insert number] Things Your _____ Never Told You About _____
- What Most People Don't Know About _____

## 2. Blog Post Titles / Headlines:

*Type of Content:* Blog posts that you write for you own blog or for other blogs.

*Tip:* A blend of descriptive and curiosity piquing headlines do well with blogs. Because you have people coming to your blog from different sources, this blend works well. Descriptive headlines help you gain the favor of search engines and they allow your visitors to scan and search your site for what they are looking for. Creating a sense of curiosity works well for those who have signed up to your RSS feed. When they see the a headline that creates curiosity, but gives some clue about what the post is about, they are likely to click through.

*Tip #2:* **Just like with articles, If keywords are important to your project**, you may want to reverse some subject lines and put the keywords at the beginning. Ex. "The Easiest Way to Improve Your Golf Score" becomes "Improve Your Golf Score - Here's The Easiest Way".

*Here are some blog post templates:*

Note, you can **use any of the article templates** in the previous section for your blog. The examples below are ones that combine the use of description and curiosity.

- I've Been Asked This a Lot Lately (RE: _____)
- _____: Not What I Expected
- The Easiest Way to _____
- Psssst…Here's a Sneak Peek
- My Mom Said This Was Crazy: _____
- Don't Be Sorry: Avoid _____ At All Costs
- Part of the Problem Is _____
- But _____ Is/Are Doing It!
- A Big Dose of Reality
- This is Exactly Why You Shouldn't _____

## 3. Email Autoresponder Headlines / Subject Lines:

*Type of Content:* Newsletters, email broadcasts, auto responder series messages. In other words, emails that go out to your subscriber or customer lists.

*Tip:* The **only** job your email headline or subject line has is to get someone to open your email. It isn't to sell them on a product or to give them insight into a topic. Curiosity is the key here. Unlike blog posts where you will likely more frequently combine description and curiosity, emails that are strictly about curiosity often produce the best results.

Curiosity is more likely to be used in promotional emails. When you're delivering strictly content, you can be more descriptive.

**NOTE:** Where most headlines are generally capitalized (first letter of each word) the whole way through, creating a more natural email subject line (as a friend would write to a friend) often works wonders on open rates.

*Here are some email headline templates* (fill in the _____ with your topic, etc.)

- This is what I've been talking about…
- Why they're wrong about _____

- It's just about that time
- This is the reason why…
- Frustrated by _____? Here's an idea
- A complete and unbiased review
- I've had enough!
- A sneak peek at _____
- Must-have freebie
- Why some people never _____
- What _____doesn't tell you about _____
- For _____ only   *[insert a particular audience: "women", "those who want to improve their backhand"]*
- *[NAME],* did you see this?
- Does this bother you too?
- Are you ready for _____?
- What if I told you _____
- There's still time (but only if you do it now)
- 5 important ways to _____
- Good news!
- Do you have a few minutes?

## 4. Sales Copy Headlines:

*Type of Content:* Content that is designed to sell your products, services, newsletter subscriptions and more.

*Tip:* A headline that you use at the top of your sales page will likely have a little more kick than for your strictly content pieces. You want maximum impact - so you make a big promise, reveal something important, issue a warning or really grab attention in some way.

*Here are some sales copy headline templates:*

- _____ Ways to Avoid _____
- _____ Steps to _____
- _____ Hidden Secrets about _____ Revealed
- _____ Little Known Ways
- _____ - If You Only Expect the Best
- Amazing _____ Breakthrough
- Announcing the First _____
- Are You Embarrassed by _____?
- Are You Fed up with _____?
- Discover _____

- Don't Buy _____ until You _____
- Don't Take Another Chance with _____
- Exposed! _____
- Finally, _____
- Give Me _____ And I'll _____
- How _____ Made Me _____ and It Can Help You Too.
- How a Complete Beginner _____
- How Do You Turn a ____ into a _____?
- How to _____ in/by _____
- How to Improve _____
- Imagine, _____
- Learn How to _____
- The Best Kept Secret _____
- The Secrets to _____
- The Truth about _____
- Tired of _____?
- Top _____ Reasons Why _____
- Unlock the Secrets of _____
- What You Need to Know about _____
- Who Else Wants to _____

Even though what you say in your headline - whether it be in an article, blog post, email or sales page - is crucially important, it's not always the easiest thing to put together. The good thing is, once you use these templates to get things started, it becomes easier and easier to come up with headlines on the fly. You'll be a headline whiz in no time!