Headline Writing Skills

HEADLINES

After editing the story in the light of basic principles of accuracy, balance , clarity, conciseness, unanswered questions, consistency of style and tone, the sub editor (Copy editor)'s next job is writing a suitable headline.

A good headline:

• Attracts the reader's attention
• Summarises the story
• Helps the reader index the contents of the page
• Depicts the mood of the story
• Helps set the tone of the newspaper
• Provides adequate typographic relief

• Headlines are Windows of the newspaper. They are a major source of information to most the people who judge top of the news by reading the headlines.
• They convey to readers the relative significance of the news

Headlines also:

• Compete with each other in attracting readers to their stories. A good story may be largely overlooked if its headline fails to attract the reader.

• They make the pages eye-catching, balanced and attractive
• The consistent use of familiar headlines styles gives the newspaper a relatively familiar look
• Headline sells the newspapers, specially those editions which are purchased at news stands or traffic crossings and streets
SKILLS FOR WRITING HEADLINES:

Four basic skills are applied while writing headlines of stories.

a) Accurate perception of the story
b) Use of broad and deep vocabulary
c) Use of sharp sense of sentence structure   AND
d) A keen eye for ambiguity

• The headline must be drawn from key information of the story
• Key words selected should fit the allotted space
• Point size need be fulfilled according to lay-out of the page

• Normally, a noun is followed by a verb and both are place in the top line if possible
• No articles, adjectives and adverbs be used in headlines

Before writing headlines, the sub editor should try to capture the flavour of the story.

• Short, simple, crisp and catchy words are preferred
• Stuffy and overworked words should be avoided
• Headlines should be phrased in present tense
• A person's name should be used in headline only if he or she is prominent
• Only single quote marks should be used in headlines
• Headlines should be specific and not vague.

IMPORTANT IS THAT THE HEADLINE MUST FIT WITHIN AN ALLOTTED SPACE ON THE PAGE. IT SHOULD CONVEY FULL SENSE OR CRUX OF THE STORY.
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