

Basics of Print Journalism

Notes by

Dr. Drishita Chakraborty

Faculty, Dept. of Mass Communication & Journalism

A.C. College, Jalpaiguri

In print journalism, the headline is the single most vital element on a newspaper page. Serving as the primary point of contact between the paper and the reader, a headline must immediately grab attention, offer a concise summary of the news story, and entice the reader to dive deeper into the full article. Writing an effective headline requires a delicate balance: it must carry intellectual weight for informed readers while maintaining an engaging, accessible tone to hold entertainment value.

Beyond choice of words and tone, the visual arrangement and typography of a headline—known as headline layout—play a critical role in page design and news hierarchy. Editors use specific headline structures to signal to the audience how significant a story is and to create a visually appealing newspaper layout.

The reader's attention goes to the headline first. The headline encourages the reader to read the whole news story. A headline presents the summary of the whole news story in short form.

In modern newspapers, entertainment value is as important as news value. For this reason, one must keep entertainment in mind while choosing the language of a headline. Again, thoughtful and intellectual people generally read newspapers. So, intelligence should show in the headline. Headlines are divided into several types based on content and writing style. For example—

Classification:

(i) Single Deck Headline: When a news headline stays in one column, it is called a Single Deck Headline. Usually, less important news uses this type of headline.

(ii) Double Deck Headline: When a news headline spreads across two columns, it is called a Double Deck Headline. Relatively less important news uses this type of headline.

(iii) Multiple Deck Headline: When a news headline spreads across more than two columns, it is called a Multiple Deck Headline.

(iv) Crossline Headline: When a news headline spreads across multiple columns but does not take up the full column, it is called a Crossline Headline.

(v) Banner Headline: Sometimes, very important news is published in very large fonts across many columns. This type of headline is called a Banner Headline. This headline is used for exceptional and extremely important news.

(vi) Centre Headline: Sometimes, a very important headline is placed in the centre of the page layout, but the news spans across many columns. This type is called a Centre Headline.

(vii) Box Headline: When a box is drawn around the news headline, it is called a Box Headline. This box can be in one or more columns. Colourful or grey boxes are used in modern newspapers.

(viii) Flash left Headline: When a headline is divided into multiple lines and the lines start aligned to the left side of the column, it is called a Flash left Headline. This type of headline is used most frequently in newspapers.

(ix) Flash right Headline: When a headline is divided into multiple lines, and the lines are aligned to the right side of the column, it is called a Flash right Headline. This type of headline is usually used in feature writing.

(x) Inverted Pyramid Headline: When a news headline has multiple lines, and the lines get shorter one after another, it is called an Inverted Pyramid Headline.

(xi) Waist-line Headline: This type of headline has at least three lines. The middle line is smaller compared to the first and third lines. This is called a Waist-line Headline.

(xii) Hanging Indent Headline: In this type of headline, the first line is longer. The following lines are scattered, meaning some are shifted to the right or left. The use of this headline is very rare. It is usually used in feature writing for variety.