

Dayton Daily News

www.daytondailynews.com

From <https://www.daytondailynews.com/> (with permission.)



[History of Journalism](#) | [Principles of Journalism](#) | [Anatomy of a Newspaper](#) |
[News Writing](#) | [News Photography](#) | [Editing and Layout](#) |
[NIE Journalism Teachers' Forum](#)

This Website is an introduction to newspaper journalism students. It is designed by the *Dayton Daily News* Newspapers in Education effort as a resource for student journalism programs.



[History](#)
[Ethics](#)
[Design](#)
[Writing](#)
[Photography](#)
[Interviewing](#)

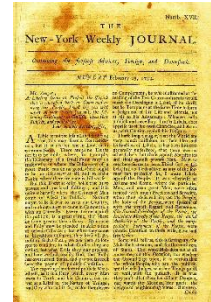
[About NIE](#) | [NIE Calendar](#) | [Order NIE Newspapers](#) | [Journalism 101](#) | [Teachers](#) | [Sponsors](#)

Copyright © 2003, Cox Ohio Publishing. All rights reserved.
By using DaytonDailyNews.com, you accept the terms of our [visitor agreement](#).



Journalism in The United States

Journalism in the United States had political beginnings. Most newspapers were not well-received by the politicians of the time. In 1690 the first newspaper in the British colonies, the *Publick Occurrence*, was published in Boston and closed after only one edition because the King's representatives didn't like what was being printed. Freedom of speech an "unalienable right" was a century away for American journalists. Newspapers of the time and well into the 19th century were published to support a political point of view. Political parties had their own newspapers to communicate their view of the world to society. Before the American Revolution supporters of independence would purchase Whig newspapers. Supporters of the British government would subscribe to Tory newspapers. Each presented the world to their readers from their own political point of view, usually by attacking their opponents in print with perceptions and opinions, and sometimes facts.



Peter Zenger and Freedom of the Press

Perhaps the most famous name in early American journalism is that of Peter Zenger. Publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal*, Zenger was accused and tried for libel against the colonial British government in 1735.



Zenger was found innocent and it was that one verdict that paved the way for a free and independent press in America. For the first time it was considered proper for the press to question and criticize the government. This is a

pillar of a free press in the United States and any country that is free. Journalists have to be able to question the actions of the government in order to make it accountable.

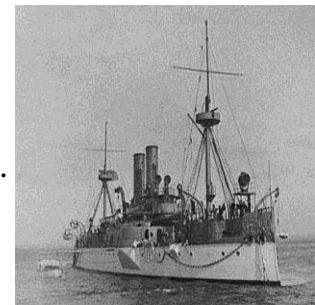
The Penny Press

It is the tradition of the Penny Press that created newspapers that look more like what we presently know as a newspaper rather than earlier versions like the *New York Weekly Journal* which were printed to promote a political point of view.

It was Benjamin Day who founded the *New York Sun* in 1833 and sold each copy for a penny to the workers of New York City. It was the Penny Press that brought newspapers to masses of Americans. The Sun was successful because it was inexpensive and easy to obtain. It was sold on the street to the working class during the American Industrial Revolution. It was the Penny Press that also began using advertising as a way to bring readers information, but advertising also helped by paying for the printing and distribution of newspapers. Cheap newspapers sold to the workers were a hit. Many other newspapers began to spring up using Day's formula for success. Within a few years most major cities in the country had numerous newspapers competing for the same customers.

The Penny Press

In order to compete, many newspapers adopted a style of journalism that emphasized sensational stories about crime, corruption or strange events. The 19th century gave rise to "yellow journalism" an era of questionable ethics and objectivity. Remnants of such journalism are present today in "supermarket tabloids" that publish stories that are admitted fabrications. One of the most famous historic examples of "yellow journalism" involved William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the *New York Journal* during the time when the United States and Spain were in conflict over Cuba just before the Spanish-American War. Hearst sent an artist to Cuba to provide drawings of the conflict. But there was no war so the artist wired the *Journal* saying he was coming home. Hearst shot off a wire saying, "You furnish the pictures, and I'll furnish the war." Hearst knew a war would sell newspapers. When a bomb sunk the USS Maine in the Havana harbor the *Journal* ran the headline "Destruction of the war ship Maine was the work of the enemy." At the time of publication it was not clear who was responsible for the explosion.





Society of Professional Journalists [Code of Ethics](#)

Associated Press Managing Editors [Code of Ethics](#)

Assembly of the Croatian Journalists' Association [Code of Ethics](#)

Ethics (eth·ics) - the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation. - Merriam Webster Dictionary

Journalism Ethics

One important difference between journalism of the 19th century and the 20th century is ethics. The world's first journalism school was formed in Columbia, Mo., in the early part of the 20th century and with it came a rise in journalistic professionalism and ethics. Today's journalists are held to a higher standard than the "yellow" journalists of the Penny Press. Today journalists are expected to act in a highly professional manner and are criticized by the public for excesses. Several professional journalism organizations have established codes of ethics. Notice the wording differences between the codes of different countries.

Journalism as the watchdog of society

The one duty of a journalist that involves the most conflict is investigative reporting. Most journalists feel they have an obligation to society to be watchdogs: to report on "wrong doings" of the government, corporations or society in general. Of course the concept of "wrong" is subjective and each person has a different interpretation of what is wrong and right. Many feel that the press was "out to get" President Nixon regarding the [Watergate scandal](#) in the early 1970s because he was a Republican. More recently many felt that the press was "out to get" President Clinton for the Monica Lewinski scandal because he was a Democrat. The investigative reporter's most important tools are courage, objectivity, accuracy and fairness. Investigative journalists must pursue investigations regardless of where they lead.



[News Judgement](#) | [Interviewing](#) | [Inverted Pyramid](#) | [News Lead](#) | [Quotes and Attribution](#) | [Transitions](#)

Elements of Journalistic Writing

Journalism is one of the most exciting forms of writing. Rather than a solitary process, reporting throws the journalist into the stream of life with the waters of society swirling about. Journalists show the community an image of itself in a manner sometimes disturbing but always meaningful. Journalists witness and record history, and share it through the people and events they cover. For an aspiring journalist to be a good journalist he or she must understand and master the elements of journalism.

What is News?

Ask any two journalists what news is and you're likely to get different answers. News is different in different cities and at different newspapers. Something that might be front page news for the *Detroit News* might not be covered by the *San Jose Mercury News*. Of course deciding what is and is not news is a subjective matter defined by each newspaper. These are some guidelines.

Prominence - Something that happens to a politician, public servant or a celebrity is more interesting than if it happens to someone not known by many. The marriage of the mayor, or the star player on the local university football team being arrested for fighting outside a local bar at midnight, are news.

Timeliness - An event that happened recently. A story about the prevention of sunburn is more timely at the beginning of summer than in November. Most stories in a newspaper, especially on the news pages, have a sense of timeliness. The word "news" implies information that is new or timely.

Impact - Something that will effect a large number of readers. A bill passed in the state senate that requires all eighth graders to pass a test before they will be allowed to advance to the ninth grade has a great deal of impact on many readers. Likewise a new manufacturing plant coming to town that will employ 1,400 workers is also news.

Conflict - Events that denote a difference of opinion that puts parties in conflict are often news worthy. Conflict usually involves surprise, tension and/or suspense. Some typical events in conflict are: sporting events, political campaigns, social issues and crime.

Novelty - Events that are unique, strange or odd. A unique event might be that a local person wins \$1 million in the lottery. A strange event could be a deer running through the downtown area of a large city or a fire station catching fire.



Techniques of interviewing

The heart of most stories is the interview. A good interviewer can get information without alienating the subject. Often the person being interviewed can be apprehensive about talking to a reporter. It is always best to do an interview in person but at times that is impractical because the subject may be in a different city or too busy to sit down with a

journalist. It is through the interview that the journalist will get the quotes necessary for the story. Facts can be obtained elsewhere, but the personal comments interest readers.

Elements of a good interview

Be prepared - Know the questions you will ask before you leave for the interview. This will involve doing background research on the topic and the person being interviewed. Make sure you are prepared by having pen and paper on the interview.

Dress properly - Remember you are a professional journalist representing the profession and the newspaper. You have to dress to make your subject feel at ease so don't over or under dress. It's easy for young journalists to be under dressed when they come to work.

Be direct - If you evade a subject, the person being interviewed will notice. Make strong eye contact.

Be observant - Take notice of the surroundings and how the subject reacts to the questions.

Be skeptical - Don't believe everything your subject tells you. Verify facts and comments when necessary.

Don't react emotionally - At times it's difficult for a reporter not to show emotions but you have to convey the impression of objectivity during the interview. If the subject feels that you have a point of view on the story you've lost credibility before the story is written.

Let the subject talk - Give your subject time to respond to the questions and time to elaborate on the topic. Control the interview but don't give the subject the impression of being controlled.

Follow up - Make sure you ask the subject if you can call if you have any questions.

Shorthand - Develop a method of taking notes rapidly. Record the interview if necessary but always ask the subject for permission. It is unethical, and in some states illegal, to tape record someone without consent.

The Inverted Pyramid

Putting the most important facts at the beginning of the story was developed in the mid-1800s when reporters began to use the telegraph to transmit stories back to their newspapers. Because the telegraph lines were unreliable the reporters found that their narrative style of journalism would get cut off by a dropped line. They then began to push the important facts to the top of the story and provided detail as the story unfolded. If a line failed they would have given the paper the most important information first.

In the Associated Press story below you'll notice that the news story is in classic inverted pyramid form. The reader could stop after the first paragraph and get the heart of the story. Also notice it answers the five "W"s of journalism.

Example

LONDON - Two London commuter trains smashed into each other during rush hour today killing 26 passengers and injuring 160 on the same rail line as another fatal crash two years ago.

Ambulance and fire crews, police and rail workers swarmed around the overturned, mangled rail cars for hours, locating and freeing injured survivors in the smoldering wreckage near the Ladbroke Grove residential area in west London.

The cause of the accident was not immediately known.

Starting the Story: Writing a News Lead

A news lead is much like the beginning paragraph for a story. It is the hardest part of the story to write because it sets the tone for the piece. A good lead incorporates the inverted pyramid style with the most important facts first. It tells readers what they want to know in a creative manner. If the reader only read the lead, he or she would have a solid grasp of the story. A good lead paints a vivid picture of the story with a few words. You need to be objective in the lead and stay away from being too dramatic or you may be perceived as sensational. Good leads make the reader want to read more. Avoid long leads that ramble or don't get to the point quickly. Also avoid using a quote for a lead. Sometimes it works, but rarely.

Examples of Good News Leads

Fairborn - A fire destroyed an apartment and heavily damaged two others, causing more than \$300,000 in damage Friday afternoon authorities said.

Teziutlan, Mexico (AP) - Digging into mounds of mud with buckets, shovels and their bare hands, soldiers and survivors searched desperately Friday for people buried alive when soaked hillsides collapsed across southeastern Mexico.

Your School - A solid defensive effort and critical scoring helped the Bears defeat rival West Carol 34-17 in the season football opener Friday night at Westburn Stadium.

Washington - When the Earth officially becomes a planet inhabited by 6 billion human beings Tuesday, that 6 billionth person - whether born in China or Topeka or Togatabu - will arrive in the midst of unprecedented global prosperity.

Using Quotes and Attributions

Quotes and their attributions present opinions of others objectively. Since it is difficult to know what people believe or feel, journalists report what people say they believe or feel. Such things are not to be assumed by the journalist. If the reporter believes that the mayor likes the direction of a work program, the reporter needs to ask the mayor how he or she feels about it rather than assuming the feelings. Attribution is needed when the facts presented are considered controversial or not common knowledge. If the basketball team wins its fourth game in a row, such a fact is common knowledge. But if the win was because the center played the best game of his career, the journalist needs to attribute that information to someone, perhaps the coach or a fan. If the reporter injects such information in a story without attribution, it is not objective. But if the reporter asks the coach if this is the center's best game ever, the reply is fact (whatever is said) because it was given by the coach. Direct quotes are powerful but the reporter can summarize and attribute the statement as well. A good rule to follow is, when in doubt attribute. If you can't attribute an opinion or statement to someone it is probably your opinion and not objective.

Examples of good attributions

Columbus - Ohio ranks among the top 10 states in protecting parks and wildlife habitats but is one of the five worst in revitalizing commercial and residential land, according to a Sierra Club report released Friday.

Lima - A young woman accused of murdering her father told jurors Monday she lived in constant fear of him and that years of abuse led her to shoot him in the back.

Your School - A one time grant of \$1,000 has been given to the debate team by former team member John Johnson. Johnson made the donation to eliminate any possibility of the team dissolving. "Some of the best times I had in high school were on the debate team," said Johnson. "I want to give the current members a chance to enjoy debating," he said. "I hope the school can find a way to fund the team for year to come," said Johnson.

Cincinnati - After rushing for more than 1,000 yards in each of his first two National Football League seasons, running back Corey Dillon has not been part of the decade-long problem for the woeful Cincinnati Bengals. Now he's talking like someone who doesn't want to stay around long enough to become part of the solution. "I'm going to keep going out and playing hard and giving my all," he said, "but I'm getting pretty sick of sitting here and trying to explain and trying to give excuses for all of this. I can't do it any more."

Transitions

One sign of good journalistic writing is the ability to move smoothly from one paragraph or thought to another. Transitions are words, phrases or entire paragraphs that hold a story together. Transitions take readers from subject to subject, fact to fact, time to time and place to place without losing or confusing the reader along the way. Here are several ways of moving from one paragraph to another:

1. Repeat a key word from a previous paragraph.
2. Use a synonym that refers to a key word in a previous paragraph.
3. Refer to a fact in a previous paragraph.
4. Use the adjectives *this* and *that* or the pronouns *he*, *she*, *it*, *they* if they refer to something or someone in a previous paragraph.
5. Other good transition words are: *for example*, *besides*, *consequently*, *furthermore*, *likewise*, *meanwhile*, *also* and *finally*.

The key to using transitions is that they must be smooth. Awkward transitions take the reader away from the information of the story and disrupt the flow.

Examples of Good Transitions

Transitions are underlined

Dayton - Montgomery County Recorder Joy Clark returned to work Tuesday, apologizing to the public and to her fellow officeholders and promising to resume a regular work schedule - something she has refused to do for close to a year.

Clark, a 59-year old Republican, said she "didn't want anyone else to be hurt" and that she was sorry that some got "caught in the crossfire" of her "vicious political

battle" with county Republican Party Chairman Jeff Jacobson.

But Jacobson said Tuesday that Clark's return is too late.

Trotwood - Trotwood firefighter/paramedic Molly Borman normally doesn't ride her bicycle wearing a sports bra - but this was for charity.

Borman, 27, is one of two dozen Dayton area firefighters, paramedics and police who let down their guard, to pose for *Hunks & Ladders* or *Babes & Badges* calendars sponsored by Firefighters Local 136.

Fairborn - Fairborn voters will get to decide whether a controversial housing development can be built as approved by the city, the Supreme Court of Ohio ruled Tuesday.

The court, in a 4-2 decision, cleared the way for a referendum to appear on the Nov. 2 ballot regarding the Indian Ridge development.



News Photography

One result of the availability of 35mm cameras is that many people who have cameras feel they are great photographers because they can point a camera at an object and get it exposed properly. Most people don't consider themselves great writers even though they know how to spell or have mastered a word processing program. There

is something special about photography that people connect with on a personal level.

News photography unlike many other forms of photography deals almost exclusively with people. Ninety-nine percent of all images in a newspaper show people in some context. At its best, news photography captures people in a candid manner that allows the reader to feel part of the event. A child playing in the sawdust during the judging of hogs at a county fair is much more revealing than a child posing for the camera in the sawdust. News photography or photojournalism comes from the tradition of documentary photography that portrays life in a realistic manner. Simply put, photojournalism shows people involved with life.



Photo Ethics

It is paramount that a news photographer understands and adheres to a strict ethical code of not faking or manipulating news photos. As journalists the only thing they have to offer their readers is credibility. Readers have to believe the images in the newspaper are real and have not been altered in any fashion. The rise of desktop computers has provided an array of software packages that can add or subtract elements from any electronic image. A photographer could ask "as a news photographer is it OK to add a baseball to a photo? After all, I know the ball was in that position, I just wasn't able to get it in the frame." **Electronically removing or adding objects to a news photo is**

unethical. If our readers question the authenticity of any part of an image then all the

facts in the paper from that point on are suspect. The National Press Photographers Association has adopted a [photo ethics policy](#) that states that images will not be altered beyond what could be done in the darkroom: burning, dodging, cropping, lightening and darkening.



The Photo Assignment

Before the news photographer goes on an assignment he or she needs to know what the assignment is about, where the subject is located and if the assignment itself has visual potential. Writers have the luxury of writing about things, impressions or feelings. News photographers have to deal with the real world because they must make an image of

an object that exists. In order to make a news photo interesting the assignment needs to lend itself to being visual. It is up to the news photographer to determine the visual potential. It's necessary for a photographer to find a visual aspect to assignments because many times non-visual assignments are news so they need to be covered. Planning before shooting the assignment is always helpful. The photographer knows the first game of the season is going to have fans excited with their faces painted and decorated. Most good photojournalists anticipate images before the assignment. If the time of the assignment is before something visual happens, perhaps the time can be changed. It is always better to find a time to show the event while it is happening than to try to shoot it before or after the fact.



For example:

If a photographer is given the assignment to shoot the grand champion winner in the cattle show of the county fair, he or she may want to shoot the contestants while the judging is going on. The possibility of a candid photo during the judging is much higher than shooting the winner after the fact.



Photo Editing

The process of photo editing is simply selecting the best image that tells the story. The best news photos are the ones that convey the news story immediately. A simple photo editing rule is that if an element of an image doesn't help the reader understand the story, then it detracts. Any element of a photo that confuses the message should be excluded. Good news photographers will edit in the camera, only including elements that help convey the significance of the subject. Telephone wires, automobiles, houses, etc. that detract from the subject should not be included. For example, in the third photo on the left the photographer used a low angle to eliminate most of the trees from the background because they wouldn't help to tell the story of workers handling pumpkins.



For example

To the left are three images from an assignment to shoot a pumpkin harvest. If you had to select the one image that told the story the best which one would it be?

Photo One- The first image is a nice detail shot of pumpkins but says little about the process or the people harvesting. It would be a nice secondary shot for a two photo package but as a stand alone image it only says "pumpkins".

Photo Two - The second photo is better because it shows the workers harvesting and does a nice job of



getting some foreground interest. The reader has a much better idea of how pumpkins are harvested. One problem with the photo is that it doesn't have a central element for the reader to focus on. The eye goes from the bottom to the top not knowing where to stop.

Photo Three - The third image is the best. The photographer has used a low angle to make a nice graphic image of the process of harvesting pumpkins. He has also stopped the motion of the pumpkin in a manner that has some impact. The painting on the side of the truck also works telling the reader the story is harvesting.



Photo Cropping

Cropping photos is the process of taking a photo and changing the dimensions so it is easier to understand. Cropping helps eliminate distracting elements of a photo. Good and effective cropping can help the image speak emphatically. Bad cropping can destroy an image. The image to the left is helped because the point of the photo is to show soccer kids coming through a tunnel of supporters. The crop helps with the impact of the image without taking out important elements.

Some things to watch when cropping:

1. Don't crop down on the heads of subjects. Many editors want to bring the top of an image to the top of any head in the photo. Such a crop make the image look as though it has fallen in on the subject.
2. Don't crop at the joints of arms or legs. If



an image is cropped at the elbow or knee it looks as though the limbs have been amputated.

3. Don't crop a photo to make it a shape that works for the layout. Images need to be cropped for impact not in order to "fit" a layout. Occasionally a pica or two needs to be taken off an image to accommodate a layout but that should be the exception rather than the rule.

Photo Captions

News photographers have a reputation of not providing comprehensive captions. Some of the reputation is warranted, so when you write a caption, also referred to as a cutline, make it as complete as possible. Even the best photograph needs a caption to

provide information the photo alone can't supply. Captions should not state the obvious. For example, the photo to the left could have a caption that says, "Brother Raymond Fitz and John McHale" or "Brother Raymond Fitz, left, president of the University of Dayton, is all smiles after a \$10 million pledge by John McHale, right. McHale is a 1978 engineering graduate of UD and now an entrepreneur. The gift is the largest single donation in the university's history." Captions should always include as many of the the five W's of journalism as possible: who, what, when, where and why. Take special care in writing captions because research has shown that readers will look at a photo and read the caption before they read the story.

10 tips for better captions

By WILL ST. JOHN

Detroit Free Press staff writer

- * Use more of the words provided by the photographer. He or she was on the spot, and what was noteworthy there may create immediacy with the reader.
- * Use your other headline idea. That is, the one you had while looking at the picture, as if the photo were to be on a magazine cover.
- * Use more from the story. Especially consider good quotes.
- * Use what you would put into a liftout.
- * Build your caption from the most powerful verb you can find. And get that verb early in the caption.
- * Build your caption from the most visual noun you can find. And get that noun early in the caption.
- * Add what happened right after the photo was taken.
- * Pack the caption with facts that show how the event was special.
- * Use the caption to refer to other material.
- * Be willing to ask for more space, if need, but also less space, if that makes for a more powerful presentation.



Photo Display

It isn't good enough to take great newsphotographs if they are not displayed well. To some photojournalists good photo use means large photos in the paper. A poor image played large is just a large poor photo. Photos should be the size they need to be to make impact. Like a well written story, good newsphotos need to run in a size that does the image justice. A great soccer shot will not inspire any reader if it is run in a single column.

At its best, photojournalism documents slices of the the world around us through a photo story. The photo story tells a story visually with few words. Like a written story it has a beginning, middle and end. The photo story to the left tells of a new teacher's first day of school. It gives the reader some insight into the world of teaching.



[Copy Editing Symbols](#) | [Spelling](#) | [Headlines](#) | [Page Design](#) | [Reference Source](#)



Copy Editing

The hub of any newsroom is the copy desk. A good copy editor must be a master of spelling, grammar, current events, punctuation, the style book, the computer and the English language. The process of copy editing is very different from reporting. The primary duty of a reporter is to get the facts accurately and on deadline. The copy editor makes sure the words of others are accurate, readable and interesting. This is not to say that copy editing isn't creative. Shaping information on deadline is a craft that has always been in demand in the publishing industry. Some think copy editing is merely proofreading. Proofreading is one aspect of the job, but good copy editors do much more. Because they do not write the stories they edit, they can read with objectivity. The newsroom depends on copy editors to find holes in stories and to question any aspects that are unclear. In a very real sense all good newspapers are defined by the quality of their copy editors.

[Copy Editing Symbols](#) | [Spelling](#) | [Headlines](#) | [Page Design](#) | [Reference Source](#)

period _A	=	⓪
colon _A	=	⓪
semi-colon _A	=	⓪
comma _A	=	⓪
substitute char.	=	⓪
quo. marks _A	=	⓪ ⓪
apostrophe _A	=	⓪
delete _A	=	⓪ del
delete/close up	=	⓪
close up	=	⓪
leave as is	=	stet
insrt _A	=	⓪ / ⓪
spell (USA) out	=	sp
transpose	=	tr
move left word	=	tr
ellipsis _A	=	⓪ ⓪ ⓪
leader dots	=	⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪
parentheses _A	=	⓪ / ⓪
refer for?	=	?

Copy Editing Marks

Copy editing marks are a type of shorthand used by editors to mark copy. Although personal computers have made markup less common, it is a valuable system to understand. Many newspapers have proof readers who use these marks to correct paper page proofs. Copy editors at these newspapers use the marked up proofs as guides for the corrections they then make on computers.

[Copy editing marks - Second Page](#)

[Copy editing marks - Third Page](#)

[Copy Editing Symbols](#) | [Spelling](#) | [Headlines](#) | [Page Design](#) | [Reference Source](#)

Spelling

Spelling is a copy editor's most important skill. Good editors have to know how to spell correctly. Most newspapers are edited on computers with spell checking software. This software is helpful, but it cannot spot errors in grammar and word use that a skilled copy editor can. Here is a list of commonly misspelled words.

Related links: [Spelling Lookup Dictionaries](#)
[Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#)

a lot
 accordion
 Albuquerque
 auxiliary
 buoy
 calendar
 category
 cemetary
 committee
 computer
 consensus

extension
 fiery
 fluorescent
 fulfill
 governor
 guerrilla
 harass
 hemorrhage
 homicide
 judgement
 lieutenant

plagiarism
 questionnaire
 receive
 recommend
 rescind
 resistance
 restaurant
 seize
 separate
 sergeant
 sherbet

**defendant
definite
dependent
develop
dormitory
dilemma
embarrass
existence**

**missile
misspell
mustache
nickle
niece
occurred
paraphernalia
pavilion**

**sheriff
siege
silhouette
subpoena
suppress
weird
wield
yield**



Headline Writing

Headline writing is one of the most difficult parts of a copy editor's job. How do you boil down a 500-word story to a six-word headline that fits? The headline's job is to draw the reader into the story. It should be interesting, accurate and filled with information. The typical rule for newspaper headlines is that the larger the type the more important the story. Usually the most important stories go at the top of the page so the larger headlines appear at the top.

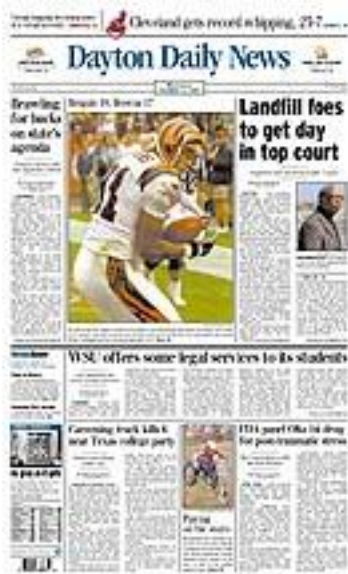
The width of headlines varies from one column to the full width of the page. Again the width of a headline usually depends on importance. A president being shot will take a six-column headline. If an editor wants a three column headline with 42 point type and two lines, a form of shorthand is used. The headline order would

be expressed as 3-42-2. The first number (3) is the column width, the second number (42) is the point size of the type and the third number (2) refers to the number of lines.

Before desktop computers became the norm in newspapers it was difficult to get a headline to fit a story exactly. Headlines were counted letter by letter, with each letter receiving a numerical value based on its width. A single column of 36 point type might have a value of 12, which would be the highest a headline could count and still fit. This method has been replaced by computers that display the size and width of a headline on the screen.

Rules for writing headlines

1. Incorporate the main features of the story in the headline. Write the headline from the lead of the story.
2. Most stories contain some key words. Build the headline around the key words.
3. Use the active rather than the passive voice in writing headlines.
4. Each line should be a complete thought.
5. It is better to begin a line with a noun.
6. Use numbers only when they are important to the story. When using numbers make them as short as possible. Three million is much better than 3,003,878.
7. Avoid abbreviations in headlines. Each newspaper uses abbreviations that make sense to their readers. For example, to readers in one area of Ohio, CSU immediately brings to mind Central State University, while readers in another area see CSU and think of Cleveland State University.



[Society of Newspaper Design](#)

Page Design

The process of designing a page is more complicated than it would seem. Getting all the information, photos and words on the page in a manner that is attractive to readers, and doing it on deadline is a challenge. It's always best to "dummy" a page before you begin the final design.

Dumming a page involves roughing out a design on a piece of paper to collect your thoughts. The Poynter Institute did a study to determine what newspaper readers look at on a page. They found that a high percentage of readers looked at images, read the captions and read the headlines. A much smaller percentage read the entire story beyond the first

couple paragraphs.

Here are some things to think about when designing a newspaper page:

1. Simple design is better than complicated design. If the design gets in the way of the information, the designer has failed.
2. Large images are better than small images. The designer should have one dominate image on the page and it should be the best image or the most important story. This helps the reader decide which story is most important.
3. Don't trap white space in the interior of the page. If you have white space (newsprint with no images or photos) design the page so it is to the outside of the page.
4. The most important stories with the largest photos and headlines should be at the top of the page. Guard against making the page top heavy by using too many elements on the top.
5. Readers look to the top left of a page first so keep that in mind when designing a page.