

Rubric for Compelling Headlines

Effective headlines are not a science. The goal in writing a headline or subject line is to make the reader compelled enough to take the next step, whether that is opening an email, reading a full webpage, reading the paragraph below, or clicking through to read more.

An effective headline will do many but not all of the following...

Address the target audience

- Is their pain point or problem addressed?
- Is a benefit introduced?
- Is the “you” present? Explicitly or implied?
- Is client-in language being used?

Be technical

- Topic, main point, or keywords are frontloaded.
- Topic, main point, or keywords are in the last 3 words.
- Headline is less than 14 words.

Provide clarity

- Does the headline make sense without any explanatory copy?
- Does the headline connect directly to the copy and avoid misleading the reader? (Information scent)
- Does the headline utilize bold, engaging, and uncommon language without being confusing? (fresh language)
- Be specific - Use numbers, and don't rely on ambiguous, lackluster words like “Awesome”

Trigger emotions

- Does the headline use power words to trigger an emotion?

Invite curiosity

- Can we identify what's not being said in this headline that will be in the copy?
(curiosity gaps)
- Does it use one of the following curiosity-invoking formulas?

Testimonials

- Utilizes a quote from a client
- *"This Cooking Plan Helps Me Make Meals for My Picky Children"*

Breaking News

- [Story] + [Effect]
- *New Google Algorithm Gives Top Blogs A Heavy Blow*

List

- [Number] Ways to [Desired outcome]
- *127 Ways To Market Your Online Course*

Juxtaposition

- [Present two conflicting ideas or positions]
- *How to Be Smart in a World of Dumb Bloggers*

How To

- How To [Method] To [Achieve Desired Outcome] Like [Gripping Simile/Metaphor]
- *How To Use Content Upgrades to Grow Your Email List Like Wildfire*

The Ultimate Guide

- The [Ultimate/Complete] Guide To [Total Transformation]
- *The Ultimate Guide To Content Marketing*