

A headline is used to tell the reader what a story is about. "Students perform poems in Pruis Hall," lets the reader know the story is about students performing poems. Pretty straight forward, eh? Most news stories and more serious types of articles will use a headline. Headlines typically follow subject/verb agreement and are straight to-the-point.

HEADLINES vs. Titles

A title is a kind of headline often used with feature stories and those that are more playful in nature. Titles don't follow the typical subject/verb agreement. Many times, titles are plays on words, puns and based on clichés. Entertainment Weekly ran "Pot Luck" when covering Michael Phelps' recent controversy after being photographed smoking marijuana. "Evan can wait," a play on "Heaven can wait," was used in an article about Sen. Evan Bayh deciding not to run for president.

Now for some examples. . .

OBAMA INAUGURATION

Title: Day of Change (Fresno Bee)

Headline: Obama takes charge (Post Register, Idaho Falls)

Why? Change all around! Obama is the first African-American president and a Democrat taking over for a less-than-popular Republican two-term.

MUSIC GROUP HANSON

Title: Mmm Bop! (Paper)

Headline: Brothers sell out coliseum (example)

Why? The group Hanson was known for their first hit, "Mmm Bop." Their popularity arguably made them hot.

COMEDIAN CHRIS ROCK

Title: School of Rock (Entertainment Weekly)

Headline: Comedian's humor keeps audience in stitches (example)

Why? Rock's last name and the success of a movie starring Jack Black help create a play-on-words title.

ACTRESS BLYTHE DANNER

Title: Mother's Day (Entertainment Weekly)

Headline: Actress finds success with new role (example)

Why? Danner is Gwyneth Paltrow's mother. Paltrow has had a great string of box office success. After being off the radar for several years, Danner returned in "Meet the Parents" and "Meet the Fockers," and was discovered by a new audience.

AMERICAN IDOL RETURNS

Title: Rock the Vote! (TV Guide)

Headline: American Idol ends season Thursday (example)

Why? The success of American Idol depends on the viewing audience voting. Idol contestants sing rock music often. Put those concepts together, and voila!

RAPPER 50 CENT

Title: Hard Candy (GQ)

Headline: Rapper drops new album next week (example)

Why? Rapper 50 Cent had a hit song, "Candy Shop." As a rapper, he has a "tough" reputation.

NBA STAR GREG ODEN

Title: A big hand for Portland (Oregonian)

Headline: Ohio stand-out newest Trailblazer (example)

Why? NBA star Greg Oden is 7 feet tall. He has a large hand, literally. Figuratively, he is able to provide his team a lot of help.

BRETT FAVRE JOINS THE NEW YORK JETS

Title: Jet Favre! (New York Newsday)

Headline: Packer packs bags, heads to NY (example)

Why? "Jet" rhymes with "Brett" (Favre).

ACTRESS TINA FEY

Title: One Fine Fey (TV Guide)

Headline: SNL vet shines in new sitcom (example)

Why? "One Fine Fey" is a play on the song "One Fine Day."

SWIMMER MICHAEL PHELPS

Title: Swimmer claims record gold (example)

Headline: Greatest. Olympian. Ever. (Red Eye)

Why? Three one-word sentences add a dramatic, definitive tone to the story.

Other great titles. . .

"The Man Who Are Too Much" — Morgan Spurlock, *Supersize Me* star

"Bright Lights, Baked Ziti" — Sopranos

"Tobey or not Tobey" — Tobey McGuire

"Tall, Mark and Handsome" — Mark Harmon

"A World of Hurt" — William Hurt

"Limp Bizness" — Limp Bizkit

"The Phantom Dennis" — Dennis Quaid

"Hot Dan!" — racer Dan Wheldon

"Makin' Change" — 50 Cent

"Zero Degrees" — Kevin Bacon