101 Headline Formulas

Capture Attention
and
Get Your Message Read

by Peter Sandeen

The Headline is The Most Important Part of Any Article

Headlines are used in newspapers, blogs, emails, landing pages, tabloids, websites, and so on, and it's always the most important part of the text.

The headline will either keep people reading what you have to say, or send them away.

So, if you publish something with a poor headline, people won't read it.

Here's some food for thought: **An average headline will keep only about 25% of people reading further.** And that's on a page where the only options are to keep reading or to leave.

Imagine what the percentages are in Twitter, where you compete for attention with dozens of other headlines at once. The most interesting headline gets the click while the others get buried under new headlines.

How to Fill The [blank]?

Many of the headline formulas in this list only require you to fill the [blank]. But the question remains, "What should go into the [blank]?"

There's no simple answer, but the **key is to understand your audience**.

Use their biggest problems, fears, hopes, values, beliefs...

I've written a free guide that helps you find out what those things are for *your* audience, so you can use them in your headlines and marketing.

If you don't know what those things are for your audience, you can't write attention-grabbing headlines.

Check out **Premeditated Marketing Guide – Create Your Marketing Framework**.

Why "Steal" When You Can Create New Headlines?

...because it takes too much time to create new (great) headlines.

...because it's almost impossible to create new (great) headlines.

...because everybody else does it, and nobody cares.

Every copywriter uses the same old headlines again and again. Sure, some headlines seem new and unique, but most often they're modified copies of the old great headline formulas.

A headline formula that worked yesterday will work today, and it will work tomorrow. So, trying to create something no one's done before is an unnecessary risk.

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't be creative. If you want to write great headlines, you need to learn to modify the formulas. You'll find at least a couple of examples for each formula. Sometimes they follow the formula exactly, but often I've modified the formula to give you more ideas.

When you understand why each headline works, you'll start to write great headlines intuitively and only use the formulas for inspiration.

What Makes Great Headlines Great?

The three characteristics of great headlines:

1. **They capture attention.**
2. **They create fascination.**
3. **They create anticipation.**

Lets break those up:

1. Capture Attention

It's quite easy to read a headline and then forget it in seconds. And (unfortunately) that's true even if the topic is important.

For example "Not all criminals get caught".

The problem with that headline is that it only states a fact everybody already knows. There's no strong emotion, there are no interesting/strong words, and it's not personal.

Here are a couple of ways to make that headline more interesting:

"Would You Get Away with a Murder?"

It's personal (would YOU get away with murder?).

It provokes emotions (get away with murder).

It uses strong words (murder).

"USA is The Only Country that Actively Fights AGAINST Justice"

It's surprising; it goes against what many people *believe*.

It provokes emotions and curiosity.

2. Create fascination

It's not enough to be interesting; too many people know how to do that.

Fascination separates great headlines from good ones.

Fascination (or powerful attraction) gets people to read more. It captures your audience's attention and "forces" them to focus on what you have to say.

How do you create fascination? This is so important, that if you're serious about copywriting, blogging, etc. you should read a book about it. And that book is "Fascinate: Your 7 Triggers to Persuasion and Captivation" (there's also a link to a free audio book version there ;)

All good headlines are at least a little fascinating, so if you want to stand out **you'll need to know how to go one step further**.

As the title of the book says, there are 7 fascination triggers. You'll have to figure out which triggers work best for your audience. And different triggers work for different products. So, create a solid marketing framework that gives you a solid foundation for your marketing (and headlines).

3. Create anticipation

Good headlines may get people to check out what the article is about. *Great* headlines get people to read the entire article (or at least to skim it to the end).

In other words: great headlines make people expect a reward for reading the entire article/post/landing page/etc.

As you read through the list of headline formulas you'll start to notice how each of them creates a premise. They imply a benefit from reading the article, even when it's not obvious. And that premise is what keeps people reading...

The Art of Sub-Headlines

Even a great headline is weak compared to one backed up by a great sub-headline.

For example "22 Ways to Write Better Headlines" is okay.

But when you add a sub-headline, it becomes a lot better: "22 Ways to Write Better Headlines - Copywriters Never Admit Using #19".

Good sub-headlines add meaning, interest, and/or value to the headline.

You should use sub-headlines whenever you can make the headline better with one. But remember that the function of sub-headlines is to make the headline *better*, not to replace a strong headline.

The difference between using a sub-headline and just combining two headline ideas into one, isn't clear. Technically a sub-headline is a separate headline, not an ending of a headline. But they accomplish the same thing and their content is usually very similar (though sub-headlines are often longer).

Learning how to write great headlines and back them up with sub-headlines is one of the key copywriting skills. Invest some time into learning it; it's well worth it even if you don't sell anything but write for magazines, blogs, etc.

Regards,
Peter Sandeen

PS. Have a great headline in mind? Feel free to brag about it here ;) And if you've already written the article etc. leave a link to it so people can read that too...

Table of Contents

Lists – 9 Ways to Write Interesting Lists..................20

Secrets, Power, and Prestige – We Want them All.24

How To - Write a "How to" Headline

One of the best ways to start writing anything is to start with a "How to [blank]" headline because it forces you to deliver value. You can change the headline later.

People want to know how to do things. And they look for that information online.

A headline that starts with, "How to" promises to deliver that information quickly and clearly.

What should follow a "How to" headline:

1. **Deliver the promised information as simply as possible.** A how to headline promises simple-to-absorb-information; don't go into too much detail. Leaving something out also leaves readers wanting more.
2. **The first paragraphs should be about the problem the article will solve.** People look for "how to" instructions because they have a problem. When you point out that problem at the start of your article, they know they should keep reading.
3. **After addressing the problem you solve, mention the result you'll provide.** Don't attempt to explain exactly what the solution is, just state the results people can expect.
4. **Try to break the process into steps.** Go over each step and explain why that step is important and/or what benefits it creates. Use headings and bolded text to make skimming easier.
5. **If you break the information into steps, repeat the core ideas at the end.** This is again about simplicity. People want to know what to do after reading a "how to" post.

1. How to [blank]

The simplest form of the "How to" family. It's not the prettiest headline, but it is effective. And it's a great starting point for writing.

There are two basic variants:

1. How to Be [blank] - "How to Be Fascinating"
2. How to Do [blank] - "How to Write Better Headlines"

2. How to [blank] – The Essential Guide

Adding the ending may not seem like much, but sometimes it makes the headline a lot stronger.

Use it when you've written an article that covers the topic really, really well.

"How to Record a Talking-Head Video – The Complete Guide"
"How to Grow Chili on a Balcony – All You Need to Know"

3. How to [blank] Like [blank]

Would you like to write headlines like the best copywriters ever?

Would a headline promising that get you to click through?

People want to be like the people they admire. If you imply you can get them closer to that goal, you've got their interest.

Note that you lose the effect if the person/group you mention isn't really admired enough. Or if they're not admired in that context.

"How to Swim Like Michael Phelps" is good because the context works.
"How to Run Like Michael Phelps" doesn't carry the needed authority.

4. How to [blank] Even if OR Without [blank]

What if there are problems ahead? Well, there usually are and your headlines can benefit from them.

"How to Stay Healthy Even if You Love Eating Fast Food"
"How to Make a 6-Figure Income Without a College Degree"

5. How to [blank] While [blank]

Implying that you can make the first [blank] so easy that you can do something else too.

Or maybe two goals aren't a good match, but you know how to accomplish both.

"How to Write a Blog Post While Talking to Your Girlfriend"
"How to Get a Promotion While Sleeping at Work"
(I don't know how to do either of these...)

6. How to Use [blank] to [blank]

You can either be conventional:

"How to Use Social Media to Promote Your Business"

Or you can be surprising:

"How to Use Social Media to Buy Bananas"

7. How to [blank] in 5 Easy Steps

If "how to" articles are about simple results then this is the Holy Grail.

Emphasizing how simple your solution is, works really well, if it really is that simple.

"How to Protect Your Blog from Spammers in 3 Simple Steps"
"How to Sell More – 3 Simple Steps"

Alarm - These Headlines Capture Attention

Humans learned to react to alarm thousands of years ago; if you didn't react to the crack in the bushes, you became the tiger's dinner.

Nowadays the threats we're faced with aren't usually life threatening, but we still react to them strongly.

If you can find *something* that really threatens *something* that *someone* cares for, you've got yourself a great headline. If your audience is mostly beginners then general topics are good ("copywriting"), but if you write for professionals then use something specific ("bullet-point structure").

Warning: Don't use alarming headlines if you can't deliver a real threat. If you let down the expectations, you'll teach your audience to ignore your headlines.

What comes after an "alarm" headline:

1. **Use a sub-headline to either agitate the fear of the threat or to offer a glimpse of hope.**
2. **First paragraphs should agitate the fear of the threat.** You get people to want the solution even more.
3. **Point out that you have a solution after the agitation.** It's often best not to tell what that solution is just yet, but instead keep readers waiting.
4. **When you finally reveal the solution in full, remind readers of the threat.** Your solution seems more valuable when the threat is on top of their minds.

8. Are You Safe from [threat]

Simple but very effective. As with the "How to [blank] Like [blank]" headline, you need to understand what your audience sees as a threat (or admires in the example).

"Are You Safe from Dying of Skin Cancer" works if your audience is old enough.
"Are You Safe from Looking Like an Idiot in Your Driver's License Picture" works if your audience is young enough.

9. Is [something valuable to you] Safe from [blank]

As with all the alarm headlines, the threat has to feel real to the readers. If you use a threat that your audience doesn't fear at all, they'll ignore your headline.

This headline formula is great if you're selling something; you can agitate the fear in the article/copy and then offer a solution at the end.

"Is Your Home Safe from Burglars" – Great if you're selling home alarm systems.

If you use this headline as the headline for a blog post, then combine it with a list sub-headline.

"Is Your Home Safe from Burglars – 3 Things to Check" – Works better in a blog post because it seems easy to implement. You can use that to sell things, but it's a different strategy.

"Is Your Dog Safe from Ticks"
"Are Your Children Safe from Pedophiles – The Best Way to Protect Them"

10. How Can You Protect Yourself from [blank]

This is a variation of the last formula. The difference is that the focus is on the reader, not something the reader values.

"How Can You Protect Yourself from Getting Dumped"
"How Can You Protect Yourself from The Avian Flu"
"How Can You Protect Yourself from Getting Writer's Block"

11. Did You Already React to [change]?

Did something change that affects your audience? Maybe a law, economic situation, or another somehow important thing changed and your audience should react.

The headline works without a sub-headline if your audience sees the change as something they should react to. But if they don't, use a sub-headline to give that reason.

"Did You Already React to The New Car Taxing Law?"
"Did You Already React to New Summer Fashion Trends – 3 Ways Not to Look Stupid"

12. First Warning Signs of [blank]

This one often works best if you add a sub-headline that agitates fears or offers hope.

"First Warning Signs of Your Marriage Breaking Apart and How to Save It"
"First Warning Signs of Your Blog Getting Banned by Google – Lifting the Ban is Nearly Impossible"

13. Are You Doing These Common [blank] Mistakes

Works best when your audience is mostly beginners or amateurs. You can use it for professional audiences too, but then you need to be extremely specific.

"Are You Doing These Common Email Marketing Mistakes?"
"Are You Doing These Common Black and White Photo Conversion Mistakes?"

14. Why [percentage] of [blank] Fail Miserably

Very effective especially if you combine it with a sub-headline.

"Why 99% of Blogs Fail Miserably – And How to Be in the Top 1%"
"Why 50% Businesses Fail Miserably – 3 Most Common Reasons"

15. Are You Sabotaging Your [blank]

Works best for amateurs (and other non-professionals) and with a sub-headline.

"Are You Sabotaging Your Business' Success"
"Are You Sabotaging Your Health – 3 Steps to Living Longer"

16. What to Do if You've Done These Common [blank] Mistakes

Most people like the idea of "living in the moment" but most of us still worry about the things we've done and said in the past. Offering a way to make things right after the fact, will attract many.

"What to Do If You've Done These Common Branding Mistakes"
"What to Do If You've Done These 7 Common Parenting Mistakes"

17. The Alarming/Surprising Truth About/Behind [blank]

So simple and so effective if you pick the right "blank".

"The Surprising Truth Behind Copyblogger's Success"
"The Alarming Truth About Teenage Drinking" – Works like a charm if you target mothers ;)

18. What Your [important person] Doesn't Know to Avoid

Pick the right person and it becomes difficult for readers to disregard this headline. But use a sub-headline or the headline may fall flat.

"What Your Son Doesn't Know to Avoid – 3 Surprising Dangers at Rock Concerts"
"What Your Dog Doesn't Know to Avoid – 5 Most Common Reasons for Deathly Accidents"

19. [blank] Mistakes that Make You Look Stupid OR [blank] Laugh at You

People are so scared of looking stupid that you'll definitely get attention with this headline. And if there's a specific group of people that your audience wants to impress then you can make it even more powerful.

"10 Common Grammar Mistakes that Make You Look Stupid"
"Style Mistakes that Make the Pretty Girls Think You're an Idiot"
"3 Common Blogging Mistakes that Make the A-Listers Laugh at You"

20. Don't Try this [blank] at Home

This works well for any audience if you pick the [blank] well.

"Don't Try This Landing Page at Home"
"Don't Ever Try This Pick-Up Line at an AA Group Meeting"

21. Does Your [blank] Suck? [blank] to Fix It

You have to provide great content to back up this headline. Or else you're seen as an idiot.

"Does Your Landing Page Suck? The Fastest Way to Fix It"
"Does Your Headlines Suck? 5 Ways to Fix Them"

22. Your [blank] Sucks!

Again, back up this headline with great content or you're the idiot.

"Your Golf Drive Sucks!"
"Your Car is Ugly!"

23. Don't Screw Up Your [blank]! 8 Most Common Mistakes

This is great for all audiences, even established professionals. Just pick a specific "blank" and your headline will work (for the right audience).

"Don't Screw Up Your Career! 3 Most Common Mistakes"
"Don't Screw Up Your Children! 5 Common Parenting Mistakes"

24. 5 Problems that are Built into [blank]

A sub-headline usually makes this one better.

"5 Problems that are Built into WordPress and How To Work Around Them"
"17 Problems that are Built into Most New Houses"

25. How [blank] will Mess Up Your [blank]

This headline offers a lot of possibilities.

"How Running will Mess Up Your Legs"
"How Having a Child will Mess Up Your Marriage"
"How Poor Design will Mess Up Your Website"

26. Is Your [blank] Losing Value?

We live in a material world and if you can point out that your audience may be losing money (value), they'll get interested.

"Is Your Car Losing Value Faster than It Should"
"Is Your Product Losing Value"

27. Does Your [something important] [do something bad]?

There are so many ways you can use this formula… Just read the examples and create your own :)

"Does Your Son Grow Weed?"
"Does Your Blog Push Visitors Away?"
"Does Your Dirty Talk Make You Sound like an Idiot?"
"Does Your Dog Secretly Drink Your Booze?"

Lists – 9 Ways to Write Interesting Lists

List headlines promise the ultimate simple-to-understand-and-use content. And that's why they're so great.

You can combine (and you often should) list headlines with other formulas to make them even more attractive.

What comes after a "list" headline:

1. **Simple, easy to understand, simplicity rules!** Don't get tricky after using a list headline. Even if your topic is complex, break it down to actionable steps.
2. **Describe where you expect the reader to be now.** Explain what's the starting point for the text and why that needs to change. Do that in the first paragraph of two. This will send a few readers away, when they realize you're not writing for them, but the ones you're targeting will definitely stay longer.
3. **Describe where you'll take the reader.** Explain what's the benefit of following your list to the end. Do that in the first couple of paragraphs.
4. **You can break individual points into smaller lists if necessary.** Remember: Lists need to be simple to understand, no matter how complicated the topic is.
5. **In the end summarize the process.** Remind the reader where they are now and where they'll get if they do everything in your list.

28. 10 Best [blank]

You can replace "blank" with a lot of different things. I usually recommend using a sub-headline to make this one more interesting, but sometimes simplicity is the key.

"10 Best Writing Tips"
"50 Best Business Books"

29. 19 Reasons Why You Should [blank]

If you use a small number, then pick a "blank" that's really interesting. Or what do you think about this headline? "3 Reasons Why You Should Exercise"

But if you use a large number then even familiar topics can work, especially with a sub-headline.

"25 Reasons Why You Should Start a Blog for Your Business"
"3 Reasons Why You Should Write Your Headline Before The Copy"
"101 Reasons Why Vanilla Ice Cream is Better than Chocolate Ice Cream"

30. 7 Reasons Why [blank] [verb] [blank]

Get creative, even weird, with this one.

"7 Reasons Why Dogs are Great Life Coaches"
"3 Reasons Why Napping is a Way to Success"

31. Top 7 [blank]

Simple and interesting. But only if there aren't too many "top" lists about the same topic.

"Top 10 Albums of 90's" There are too many lists like this for this to be interesting. But if you add a sub-headline it could work well: "Top 10 Albums of 90's – Chosen by Lady Gaga"

The other way to use this headline is to turn it into a "normal" list headline.

"Top 3 Copywriting Mistakes"
"Top 10 Productivity Tips"
"Top 5 Email Marketing Tips You Can Learn from Hedgehogs"

32. 3 Most Common Mistakes [your audience] Make

Be as specific with the "blank" as you can for the best results. Don't just say "bloggers", but instead say "food bloggers", "beginning bloggers", or "Spanish bloggers".

You can also add a sub-headline to make the headline even more focused on one group of people.

This is one of the basic principles of effective marketing: If you target everyone, you attract no one.

"5 Most Common Mistakes Starting Entrepreneurs Make"
"3 Most Common Mistakes Large Blogs Make"

33. 7 Great Examples of [blank]

Sometimes people just want inspiration. And what would be a better way to inspire than to show great examples.

You can make the headline more interesting if you add "and How to Make them Even Better" to the end of it.

"10 Great Examples of New Clothing Brands"
"5 Great Examples of Landing Pages and How to Make them Even Better"

34. 10 Hilarious Examples of [blank]

You learn more from mistakes than from successes. I hate that, but it's usually true.

Fortunately you can learn from other's mistakes too.

"3 Hilarious Examples of Drunk Skateboarding"
"5 Poor Examples of Marketing Webinars"

35. 5 Best Ways to Get [blank]

People are skeptical. Offering several perspectives seems more trustworthy than explaining just one and calling it the ultimate solution.

"3 Best Ways to Grow an Audience"
"10 Best Ways to Help The Children of Africa"

36. 101 Tips for [blank]

The problem with huge lists like 101, 1000, or even just 50, is that people may expect the quality to be poor. But if you can pull it off, then showcase it with the headline.

"Tips" is one of the best words in a headline like that. It sounds like bite-sized ideas and therefore justifies large numbers.

"50 Tips for Increasing Your Landing Page Conversion"
"101 Tips for Creating a Romantic Weekend"

Secrets, Power, and Prestige – We Want them All

Secrets, Prestige, Power. You could divide the following list of headlines into those three categories. But there's a reason why you shouldn't.

They work extremely well together: You offer a powerful secret that leads to prestige.

These headline formulas are often used annoyingly; they don't deliver what the headline promises. Don't do that, you'll quickly teach your audience to ignore your headlines even when they're really interesting.

What should follow "secrets, power, and prestige" headlines:

1. **Increase the feeling of mystique in the first paragraphs; that's what people expect.** It also gives them more reason to keep reading.
2. **Explain why you know the secret or why you can offer the power/prestige.** You'll lose a lot of readers if it feels like you don't actually have anything valuable to offer.
3. **Explain the secret or method that gives the power/prestige.** Don't reveal everything at once, but keep building more mystique as long as you can.
4. **Explain how to use the secret or method.** That's what people came to read, so that's what you should offer.
5. **If the secret isn't extremely surprising, remind readers that most people don't know how to use the secret.** This will make it seem valuable even though it might be common knowledge (that just isn't used the right way).

37. The Secret [someone respected] Doesn't Want You to Know

90% of headlines that use this formula suck!

Please, use it as it's meant to be used: Your audience has to believe that the person/group you refer to, actually has a secret or is holding something back.

Having secrets or holding something back isn't necessarily bad. Many information businesses hold something back on purpose to get you to buy their products. No one thinks that's bad.

If you use a name that your audience sees as completely honest and open, your headline will fail.

"The Secret The Government Doesn't Want You to Know" – Perfect if your audience is filled with conspiracy theorists.
"The Secret Your Mom Doesn't Want You to Know" – Great for teen-agers.

38. 5 Things Your [close person] Doesn't Tell You

A variation of the last headline. Again your audience has to believe there's something worth knowing.

"5 Things Your Daughter Doesn't Tell You"
"3 Things Your Personal Trainer Doesn't Tell You about Weight Loss"

39. 13 Secrets of Successful [blank]

Unlike the last two headlines, this one doesn't imply that they're keeping something from you on purpose. Rather they're just forgetting to tell you.

"7 Secrets of Successful Real-Estate Agents"
"11 Secrets of Successful Models for Staying in Shape"

40. The 4 Little-Known Facts about [blank]

The phrase "little-known": you get to call people just a little dumb, without sounding like an ass.

"The 5 Little-Known Facts that Affect Your Marketing"
"The 3 Little-Known Facts about Making Money Online"

41. The Zen of [blank]

Wouldn't it be nice if your life could be a little simpler? Calmer? And more enjoyable?

That's what this headline promises to deliver.

If your audience is the rising stars of Wall Street then this isn't the best headline (it goes against their beliefs). But for most people "Zen" has a strong positive emotional meaning.

Usually you get the best result when you use it with things that aren't normally associated with Zen.

"The Zen of Blog Design"
"The Zen of Market Research"

42. What the [interesting group of people] Can Teach You about [blank]

There's lots of people and groups of people who carry a certain prestige or mystique. You can use famous people, ancient civilizations, etc.

You can replace "blank" with either something logical or something weird.

"What the Mayas Can Teach You about Email Marketing"
"What Paris Hilton Can Teach You about Getting Publicity"

43. What [blank] Can Teach You about [blank]

A variation of the last headline, just more common.

"What Having a Dog Can Teach You about Parenting"
"What College Can Teach You about Real Life"

44. Do [something] like [someone]

We all admire someone. Not necessarily everything about them, but at least parts of them. And we're willing to do a lot to become more like them in those ways.

Consider using a controversial person in the headline.

"Get People on Your Side Like OJ Simpson"
"Party Like Britney Spears"
"Make an Interview Like Borat"

45. 5 Things Not Even Your [trusted person] Knows about [blank]

One of the best prestige-driven headlines; be better than the person you most admire.

"5 Things Not Even Your Daughter Knows about Facebook"
"3 Landing Page Optimization Tricks Brian Clark Doesn't Know about" ;)

46. How to Be Better at [blank] than [someone respected]

Simply put promise of something almost every person secretly (or openly) desires.

"How to Be Better at Photographing than Annie Liebovitz"
"How to Be a Better Copywriter than Eugene Schwartz"

47. Be The Best [blank] Your [blank] has Ever Seen

This may at first seem like a weak headline, but in the right context it becomes very useful.

"Be The Best Lover Your Girlfriend has Ever Seen"
"Be The Best Sales Rep Your Boss has Ever Seen"

48. The 3 Simple Principles Behind [something complex]

If you can simplify something really complex, you gain a lot of authority. And people want to know the simplified version for two reasons:

1. They want to understand the complex topic.
2. They want to seem clever by telling the simplified version to their friends.

Just keep the number as low as possible or the headline loses effect.

"The 3 Simple Principles Behind Building an Engaged Audience"
"The 2 Simple Principles Behind Great Parenting"

49. 3 Ways to Becoming a Respected [blank]

Prestige, prestige, prestige. It's not the best fascination trigger for everyone, but it's often the one thing people fight harder for than money.

You can also try, "The Way to Become a Respected [blank]".

"5 Ways to Becoming a Respected Writer"
"3 Ways to Becoming a Respected Source for Referrals"

50. The 7 Common Habits of All Successful [group of people]

Get inside the heads of the people whose footprints you're following.

"The 5 Common Habits of All Successful Entrepreneurs"
"The 1 Common Habit of All Successful Investors"

51. The [famous expert] Guide to [blank]

"The Ernest Hemingway Guide to Writing" sounds better than "My 3 Writing Tips". But the content could still be almost the same.

If you can tie your content to a respected person, it's usually worth it.

"The Freud Guide to Understanding Your Relationships"
"The Charles Chaplin Guide to Comedy"

52. The [sex symbol] Guide to [your topic]

Hey, sex sells… No joke. Regardless of your topic and the connection between the person and your topic, this headline attracts many (but not all) readers.

"The Meagan Fox Guide to Interesting Headlines"
"The Katy Perry Guide to Dancing"

53. 7 Things [blank] Taught Me about [blank]

If you have personal experience about doing something your audience wants to do, you can use it in a headline.

I'd avoid faking the headline; use real experiences. Unless you obviously exaggerate.

"3 Things Tibet Taught Me about Humanity"
"15 Things Dating The Pope Taught Me about Drinking and Driving"

54. Some People are [something desirable] – Are You?

Implying that the reader should already be like something is very powerful. It works even if the reader hasn't thought about it, but it's best when you're agitating the reader's feeling of inadequacy (though it's slightly mean).

"Some People Write Great Blog Posts in 20 Minutes – Can You Do That?"
"Some People are Close with Their Families – Are You?"

55. Get More [something desirable] Now

Oh, so simple and effective.

If you take away the "now" from the end the headline loses most of its effect. The implication that you'll get something immediately, is the reason this works as well as more intricate headlines.

"Get More Email Subscribes Now"
"Get a Higher Salary Now"

56. Make Your [blank] as Desirable as [blank]

Comparisons work when they create an emotional reaction in the reader. When you're comparing reader's "blank" to something else you need to make sure the comparison is favorable.

"Make Your Product as Desirable as Chocolate" – Good
"Make Your Product as Desirable as a Shower After a Bird Took a Dump on Your Head" – Questionable even though you'd definitely want a shower in that situation ;)

57. Be The [sex symbol] of [blank]

By now you've read enough about prestige driven headlines to understand why this headline works.

"Be The Daniel Craig of Your Company"
"Be The Charlize Theron of Your Book Club"

Make a Bold Promise – These Headlines Will Make You Money

There are a few advantages to making a simple yet interesting promise in the headline:

1. It immediately tells the reader what they can expect to get from the content.
2. It implies measurable results.
3. It creates high expectations.
4. It highlights the most important benefits.
5. And it's damn easy to write.

Most landing pages and sales letters use a promise headline because of those advantages. And if there's no reason to be more complicated than giving a promise, then do just that.

What comes after the "promise" headline:

1. **Repeat your promise early in the copy.** It's not that people wouldn't remember it from the headline. You'll just confirm, that's what they'll get if they read on.
2. **Talk about the pain you'll solve.** Even when the pain is obvious, you should make the reader experience how life sucks without the promised benefits.
3. **Refer back to the problems you'll make go away while you go over the benefits.** That makes the benefits feel more important.
4. **If you can, offer more value than you originally promised.** Your offer/solution will feel even better when there are unexpected benefits/bonuses.
5. **Deliver the promise right at the end.** The moment you give the goods, you lose your readers' focus.

58. The Ultimate Guide to [blank]

You can't get much bolder with your headlines than this. But that's why it's so effective.

When you promise "the ultimate guide", you imply it's the only guide the reader will ever need. So, it's perfect for lazy readers who don't want to do more than the minimum amount of work. Hint: that's most of us…

"The Ultimate Guide to Tennis"
"The Ultimate Guide to Getting More Customers"

59. The Only 7 Steps of [blank]

Use your readers' laziness to your advantage.

"The Only 3 Steps of Perfecting Golf Swing"
"The Only 5 Steps of Training a Dog"

60. The Only [blank] You'll Ever Need

Yes, you can say it that bluntly. And if you have enough credibility, it doesn't feel like too much hype.

"The Only Marketing Guide You'll Ever Need"
"The Only Recipe Book You'll Ever Need"

61. Everything You Need to Know about [blank]

Unlike the last few headlines, you can use this one with complex topics as well as simple ones.

"Everything You Need to Know about The Congress"
"Everything You Need to Know about Using Webinars for Lead Generation"

62. Finally a Solution to [blank]

If you do have a solution to an old problem, why wouldn't you highlight that?

"Finally a Solution to Creating Great Landing Pages Easily" (affiliate link, but I use it myself too)
"Finally a Solution to Chronic Back Pain"

63. The Best Way to [blank]

This is one of the most popular headlines. If you use it, you create high expectations that you need to be able to meet in the content.

"The Best Way to Gain Readers"
"The Best Way to Get Rid of Caffeine Addiction"

64. Become a Great [blank]

One of the best headlines for sales pages (that sell information products).

The headline should never be complex just for the sake of being complex. Sometimes the simplest ones work just as well.

"Become a Great Copywriter"
"Become a Great Golfer"

65. Learn to [blank]

"Learn to..." is a relative of "How to..." They work for the same topics, but "Learn to..." is better for complex tasks.

"How to Build a Car Engine" sounds stupid but "Learn to Build a Car Engine" makes sense.

Sub-headlines and/or headline endings are often necessary to make the headline stronger.

"Learn to Sing Like Your Favorite Singer"
"Learn to Write Headlines that Capture Attention"

66. Learn/Do [blank] While You [blank]

Can learning to [blank] be so easy that you can do [blank] at the same time?

Use this headline when you can teach something in a simple way. And don't use this if your audience thinks that the basic skill is very difficult/important; you'd seem like you don't take it seriously.

"Lose Weight While You Eat Your Favorite Foods"
"Learn How to Write While You Watch TV"

67. [product name]

Yes. Sometimes it's that simple. But only if your product's name is good ;)

"101 Headline Formulas"
"Landing Page Checklist"

68. Make More Money with Your [blank]

Sounds promising, doesn't it? If you can provide ways for people to make money from something they're already doing, you'll get their attention.

"Make More Money with Your Blog"
"Make More Money with Your Writing"

Ask Questions – Try Not to Answer These

What's your favorite food?

Odds are you tried to answer that before you even noticed it.

Now try NOT to answer this question:

Would you like to learn how to write better headlines?

Odds are you tried to answer that even though you tried not to.

When you're asked a question, you try to answer it intuitively. And that's great news for headline writing.

Ideally you get the reader to imagine the problems you can solve, or the benefits of solving them. In other words you get them to imagine what you can do for them.

What should follow a "question" headline:

1. **Make sure the reader is imagining the problems you can solve or the benefits you can offer.** Use a sub-headline and the first paragraphs for that. This will be the foundation of your article/ copy.
2. **Agitate the fears and make the solution seem more valuable in any way you can.** Do whatever you can to make the answer (to the question) seem more important.
3. **Answer the question at the end, no sooner if possible.** You'll lose the readers focus when you give out the answer.

69. Do You Know What Keeps Your [blank] from Getting Better?

This headline agitates fears and makes a promise of a solution.

In my opinion this is one of the best headline formulas.

"Do You Know What Keeps Your Landing Pages from Converting Better?"
"Do You Know What Keeps Your Relationships from Getting Better?"

70. Do You Know What's The Most Important [blank]?

This is a little risky: If the reader feels confident that they know the answer, they won't read on. So, use it for content that's directed to beginners and amateurs rather than highly trained professionals.

"Do You Know What's The Most Important Part of Your Copy?"
"Do You Know What's The Most Important Problem for Your Customer?"

71. What Would Happen if You'd [a big change/accomplishment]?

Though this is a question, it makes a clear promise to deliver that change. It's powerful for the same reasons that all promise headlines are, but it adds the benefits of asking a question.

"What Would Happen if You'd Get Ten New Subscribers with Each Blog Post?"
"What Would Happen if You'd Make an Extra $100 Per Month?"

72. What Happens when You Combine [blank] with [blank]?

If you use the right blanks you can capture attention and create interest.

"What Happens when You Combine Headlines with Questioning?"
"What Happens when You Combine Drinking and Blogging?"

Be Weird – "Normal" is The New Boring

Sometimes it's just best to be weird. If you're weird enough in the right way, you'll get attention and people to read on.

There are several ways to be weird. But whatever way you choose, **the headline should make sense after reading the content that follows it**.

Using weird headlines is a good way to grab attention when the topic isn't new but instead discussed frequently. You can get your ideas read when you give a weird enough spin on them.

What comes after weird headlines:

1. **The sub-headline** (if you use one) **can be even weirder than the headline or explain it.** If it explains the headline, it ruins the interest that came from being weird. So, only explain the weirdness if your topic is interesting enough on its own.
2. **If you used a weird metaphor etc. use it till the end.** The headline makes no sense if you don't use it in the text.
3. **Weirdness alone isn't enough to keep people interested.** You'll need to give people reason to read an entire article/copy as fast as possible. So, make it clear to the reader why they should read on.
4. **Be weird in the end.** Remind people about the weirdness in the last few sentences, or be even weirder, and they're more likely to share your weirdness with their friends.

73. How to Seduce Gold Fishes

This isn't really a headline formula, but instead it's an example.

Why does it work? Because it makes no sense at all. But it wouldn't work if it said, "How to Interest Worms".

"Seduce" is an attention-grabbing word. And gold fishes create an interesting mental image for most people. So, whatever words you use, make sure they create positive emotions and mental images.

And as with all weird headlines, it has to make sense in the end. If it doesn't, you let down the reader.

"How to Seduce Gold Fishes"
"Riding an Ant to The Grocery Store"

74. Why [perceived enemy] is Your Friend

Giving praise to someone who's perceived as an enemy is interesting. Usually the article is about what you can learn from the enemy or how they help you without noticing it.

"Why The New FTC Guidelines May Become Your Best Friend"
"Why The Global Economic Crisis is a Blogger's Friend"

75. Why [something boring] is The Fastest Way to [something incredible]

Making any surprising connection works as a weird headline. But this headline is a little tricky to use really well.

You can easily think of something boring and some incredible results. And you may even figure out a way to connect those two. But the connection is often weak, which makes the article a slight disappointment for the reader.

So, unless you really can make a strong connection, think of another headline.

"Why Writing a Journal is The Fastest Way to Blogging Success"
"Why Riding a Bicycle is The Fastest Way to Becoming a Millionaire"

76. Get [blank] by [doing something unrelated]

This headline is a variation of the last one, but it doesn't create such a strong expectation of solid logical arguments.

"Get Slim by Buying a Bigger TV"
"Get Rich by Working Less"

77. The [blank] that [did something]

This headline formula is used quite often in magazines. And you can use it too.

You can use this without being weird, but if there's nothing surprising about the headline, it won't create as much interest.

"The President that Farted During a State Dinner"
"The Cat that Killed 5 Bears"

78. How to Explain [blank] to [blank]

This is one of my absolute favorites. But not everybody likes/understands it, so use it carefully.

There are three good things about this headline.

1. It implies simple but comprehensive information.
2. It implies comedy even if the topic is serious.
3. It stands out in search results if you manage to make your way there.

"How to Explain Marketing to Rednecks" (I'm working on this ;)
"How to Explain Astrophysics to a Lemur"

79. Why [blank] is Like [blank]

This headline doesn't have to be extremely weird to work well. But for maximum effect, be at least a little weird.

"Why Blogging is Like Owning a Dog"
"Why Saving Money is Like Burning Money"

80. [blank] is The Reason Why You Can't [blank]

Again a headline that doesn't have to be weird to work. But it has to be surprising.

"The Government is The Reason Why You Can't Feel Safe at Home"
"Dogs are The Reason Why You Don't Sleep in a Cave"

81. Have You Seen [blank] [a surprising place]?

Yet another way to combine two unrelated things.

"Have You Seen The Vodka Advertisements During Cartoons?"
"Have You Seen a Pop Concert at The MET?"

A Quickie –We Want Things to be Fast

Urgency is one of the characteristics of great headlines. You can create it in many ways, but here are the most common ones:

1. Using time constraints.
2. Using the words "now", "fast", "immediately", etc.
3. Promising fast results ("shortcuts", "fastest way", etc.)

What follows a "quickie" headline:

1. **Write simple.** When you make a simple promise, your copy/text should be just as simple.
2. **Write short.** Readers are expecting to get something fast, so leave the long stories for another time and just say what you need to.
3. **Deliver exactly what your headline promises.** Don't change the promise your headline makes, don't make additional offers. Just deliver what you promised, unless of course your selling something, then bonuses are always nice.

82. Get [blank] – Save 50%

This works on me better than I'd like to admit. And it works on most other people too.

If you can offer something that people want even a little bit and give a good discount on it, many of them will buy it.

You can also use this effectively as an upselling technique: offer a discount on a related product immediately after a purchase.

"Get 12 Month Gym Membership – Save 50%"
"Get 2 Eyeglasses for The Price of 1"

83. Limited Offer – [blank]

Urgency is the most important key in this headline. When you make it obvious that the offer won't last long, you force people to make quick decisions. And when there's the possibility to "save" money, the decision is often to buy.

"Limited Offer – Get 3 Jeans for $19.99"
"Limited Offer – Save 30% on Hotels when You Order Now" (Note the "double" urgency created with "limited offer" and "order now".)

84. Get [blank] by [doing something simple] Now

We live in the time of productivity. If you can show people how to accomplish more without spending more time, they'll listen.

"Get Slim by Eating this New Miracle Pill" Obviously the headline is lying, but it still captures attention…
"Get More Email Subscribers by Following these Simple Steps"

85. Get [blank] for FREE

Free is the best price you can offer. But don't forget that free is now normal, so you still need to "sell" what you offer.

"Get FREE Marketing Consultation"
"Get a T-Shirt for FREE!"

86. Get [blank] without Wasting Your [time/money]

This headline isn't just about urgency; it also agitates fears. People are scared of wasting their time and money on things they could get faster or more cheaply.

You can use this headline on sales letters as well as articles. And if you pick an important "blank", you'll attract attention.

"Get a Book Deal without Wasting Your Time on Agents"
"Get Your House Sold without Wasting Your Money"

87. Win [blank] with Your [blank]

You can say just "Win [blank]", but that's so overused, that many people won't even notice it anymore.

When you make the headline more specific, it captures much more attention. And you can even target a specific segment of your audience at the same time.

"Win a Trip to Canada with an Interesting Tweet"
"Win 100 Pounds of Cat Food with Your Cute Cat Videos"

88. The Fastest/Simplest Way to [blank]

People like things fast and easy. That's especially true if the benefits are usually difficult to get.

"The Fastest Way to Grow Your Emailing List"
"The Simplest Way to Write Attention Grabbing Headlines"

89. Get [blank] Before [blank]

You can use this in at least two very different ways. Either you can put a date to the end of the headline to make it a "limited time offer". Or you can use something less concrete.

Both variations can be very effective and you'll just have to think which one suits your situation.

"Get In Share Before The Beach Season Begins"
"Get New Jeans Before Christmas and Save $10"

90. How to [blank] in [short time]

Another "how to" headline. This headline formula is used often (and I mean really, really often) on blogs. But that's because it works.

The problem is that it's becoming so common that it doesn't interest anymore. So, try to add a twist to it if you can and/or be even more specific than others.

"How to Get 8.431 Email Subscribers in 3 Hours with Your Noodle Recipes"
"How to Make a Million Dollars in 1 Year"

91. 4 Shortcuts to [blank]

Who doesn't like shortcuts? Maybe your boss when it comes to *your* work, but if *they* can take a shortcut, they probably will.

This is one of the only headlines that often work *better* if the topic is vague than if it's laser-focused.

"5 Shortcuts to a Happier Life"
"17 Shortcuts to Taking Great Photographs"

92. The Fastest Shortcut to [blank]

This is the "ultimate" lazy headline. But it promises a lot, so prepare to meet high expectations.

"The Fastest Shortcut to Looking Like a Super Model"
"The Fastest Shortcut to Learning a New Language"

93. 10 Quick Ways/Tips to Improve Your [blank]

Quick tips about quick was to improve something. Who wouldn't like it?

Unfortunately most articles that use this headline formula, are poorly written; remember that "quick tips" isn't the same as "useless tips".

"11 Quick Ways to Improve Your Sex Appeal"
"5 Quick Tips that Make Your Children Love You More"

For The Lazy – Nobody Likes Work

People like to read articles that give them easy to use ideas. And they just generally like things to be easier.

Writing a headline that promises great results with minimal effort is usually the best way to capture attention and get people to read on.

What should come after a "lazy" headline:

1. **Repeat what you promised in the headline at the beginning of the text.** Reassure readers that they're reading something valuable.
2. **Use the first few paragraphs to make the promise more valuable.** But don't linger on the benefits/problems; people want to get to the real content quickly.
3. **Write short.** You're writing for "lazy" readers, so don't expect them to read 5000 word blog posts.
4. **Repeat the process/steps in the end.** Again this is for the lazy; offer them a simple way to see an overview of the process at the end.

94. Getting [blank] Has Never Been This Easy

This headline is used misleadingly quite often. The headline means that something has changed and/or there's a brand new opportunity/product available that makes something easier to accomplish.

It's not enough that you've updated your product. If there's nothing significantly new, people will be disappointed if you used this headline.

"Making a Living Online Has Never Been This Easy"
"Getting Robbed Has Never Been This Easy"

95. Make [blank] Easier

Replace "blank" with something specific. If you use (like many people do) a vague word, most readers will stop reading as soon as they figure out what you're actually writing about.

"Make Life Easier" – It's interesting but vague.
"Make Life with Children Easier" – Specific enough to attract truly interested readers.

96. 3 Simple Steps to Great [blank]

A list headline that promises more than just simple advice. Again this sparks high expectations that you'll have to meet from the start of the first paragraph.

Don't use with large numbers. (I know this may seem obvious, but I've seen a lot of "15 Simple Steps…" headlines.)

"5 Simple Steps to Great Email Marketing"
"3 Simple Steps to Throw a Great Party"

97. 5 Ways to Simplify [blank]

This is one of the only headlines that are *okay* even if you use a vague "blank".

It's always better to be specific, but for some reason the word "simplify" allows wider topics.

"5 Ways to Simplify Life"
"20 Ways to Simplify Product Development"

98. [accomplish something difficult] Easily

Be careful with this headline formula; it's always on the edge of too-good-to-be-true.

"Get 100,000 Twitter Followers Easily" is too good to be true and you'll seem like a fraud.
"Get 100 Twitter Followers Easily" is believable but for many audiences it's not that interesting.

"Get a Raise Easily"
"Find New Friends Easily"

99. [blank] is as Easy as [blank]

You can use this formula in a "traditional" way:

"Finding a Job is as Easy as Looking from The Right Place"

Or you can be weird with it:

"Finding a Job is as Easy as Teaching a Dog to Fetch a Treat" (If you can teach your dog to not eat something that they like and is already in their mouth, let me know…)

100. The Lazy [reader's profession/hobby] Guide to Success

This headline promises an easy and quick to implement process for a specific group of people. If your process isn't simple and quick to use, it'll disappoint the reader.

"The Lazy Blogger's Landing Page Checklist"
"The Lazy Photographer's Guide to Photoshop"

Get the Last Word

There are lots of headlines that didn't fit in this list.

What's your favorite out of the ones here, and what did I miss?

101. The List Goes On…

Click here now for more headline ideas and to share your favorites.

And feel free to brag with your best headlines and leave a link to the articles too.

I promise to check them out.

That's it for now… Hope you'll get inspiration for your headlines, capture attention, and get people to read all the way to the end of the text.

- Peter