**Strategy 41 Headlines, Metadata**

Think like a reader or Web user. If you don’t know the story, what do you think it is about? Are the headlines too general? Too specific [think of the readers location]? Too jargon- or pun-laden so that you don’t “get” them?

[Take a look at [today’s front pages](http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/) at the Newseum.org site. Take a look at coverage of a national; story (election, “don’t ask, don’t tell”) and compare the heds. Do the same with online sites e.g. [CNN](http://www.cnn.com/). Usually there’s a “tease” then a proper hed on the story itself. Note <title> on each story.]

Online heds need to be findable by search engines. [Part of SEO—search engine optimization—more TK on that.] That means they are more likely to have to “play it straight,” rather than make jokes or allusions. Include full name: Jared Kushner security clearance challengecd

Try to write online in the second person: “How much the local tax increase will cost you”

Meta tags/metadata [they don’t get this right—where they say “this information includes the Web site’s title page, which is a couple of words” (p. 268) , I think they mean “page title.”

Here is what gets **searched**, in order:

1. URL
2. <title> … </title>
3. <meta name="description" content="This is a site about sports…" />
4. <meta name="keywords" content="news, sports, politics, Philadelphia …" />
5. <h1>
6. first 250 words on the home page with keywords or keyphrases, (but don't spam these or other keywords)

Also reciprocal links and $ will get you a higher search ranking

Don’t overdo a current movie title, etc. Puns OK if there is a secondary hed to explain it [they call those “drop headlines” but never define the term; you will also hear “deck” heds, “kicker” or just primary and secondary.] [Google will added news keyword meta tags, but then dropped them this year e.g. :

<meta name="news\_keywords" content="World Cup, Brazil 2014, Spain vs Netherlands, soccer, football">

**Mission or purpose of headlines**: [combined lists]

1. Provide a summary/sense of the story
2. Entice the reader
3. Present the mood of the story
4. Set the mood of the site or publication
5. Indicate importance/hierarchy of stories
6. Help the design—contrast, proximity, repetition, alignment

Good ones also

* have a strong verb [generally use S-V-O: subject-verb-object, especially online; verb-less heds are called “label heds” e.g. Hard times
* avoid jargon (e.g. “nix” meaning strike down or “mum” meaning silent)
* uses present tense [future is special, often use infinitive: Trump to submit proposal Sunday]
* add detail, but not (often) people's names: Girl, 6, injured in bus accident
* are tasteful: Would you run: With guts like this, who needs 2 arms? (see p. 259)
* are not libelous

How to (10 steps). Note that this boils down to reading the story first, jotting down a few keywords, doing a rough hed, and then revising. Usually you will revise a lot. Think like a thesaurus. [See headline tweaking handout]

“Special” punctuation/abbreviation/format rules:

* use comma for “and”: Trump, Pelosi trade jabs
* semi-colon acts like a period
* colon generally is for attribution as in Report: Deficit hits record high
* use single quotes wherever you would use double (quotes, composition titles)
* abbreviate everything under 10: Train crash kills 3
* generally omit forms of “to be” : Arrest made in hospital rape
* generally omit articles (a, an, the)
* generally (except NYTimes) use “downstyle” heds (cap only first word and proper nouns
* avoid bad line breaks (keep verb parts together or adjective-noun; see handout; less of an issue online))
* No period at the end of headlines online as well as in print