

The 35 Headline Formulas

by: John Caples

I've previously discussed the importance of headlines and why they deserve the majority of our attention when writing copy. But what does a solid headline look like? As it turns out, John Caples (one of the most famous copywriters of all time) put together a list of 35 headline formulas in his book, *Tested Advertising Methods*.

I've pulled all 35 of them for this post. I even included guidelines for how to use each group. You'll never draw a blank on headlines again.

Using Keywords in Headlines

These are your workhorse headlines. Use them often.

When you can't come up with anything and your blinking cursor starts staring you down, choose one of these bad boys. Each sets you up to get the attention you need.

Now that I've shown you these formulas, you'll see them everywhere. But don't worry, they can't get overused. Now matter how often we see a headline that starts with the word "How," we never grow immune to it. As long as the rest of the headline is about something we're interested in, we bite.

These headlines also encourage you to write good copy that provides value through helpful information. Use these headlines to teach, explain, and help people. Then ask for the sale. You'll build trust with your audience and prove to them that you have value to offer.

1. Begin Your Headline with the Words "How To"
2. Begin Your Headline with the Word "How" (It's basically a duplicate, I know)

3. Begin Your Headline With the Word "Why"
4. Begin Your Headline with the Word "Which"
5. Begin Your Headline with the Words "Who Else"
6. Begin Your Headline with the Word "Wanted"
7. Begin Your Headline with the Word "This"
8. Begin Your Headline with the Word "Because"
9. Begin Your Headline with the Word "If"
10. Begin Your Headline with the Word "Advice"

Headlines that Focus on Benefits

My favorite headlines focus on benefits. When people consider new products or services, they want to know how their lives will improve. Don't keep them guessing, throw that benefit straight into the headline.

These headlines will give you the most sales with the least amount of effort. Take the time to get good at them and you'll never have to worry about your marketing failing ever again.

11. Use a Testimonial Headline
12. Offer the Reader a Test (Can Your Kitchen Pass the Guest Test?)
13. Offer Information in Value
14. Tell a Story
15. Warn the Reader to Delay Buying
16. Let the Advertiser Speak Directly to the Reader (Write the entire ad in the first person and speak directly to the reader)
17. Address Your Headline to Specific Person or Group (I suggest you address your target market)
18. Have Your Headline Ask a Question
19. Offer Benefits Through Facts and Figures

News Headlines

These 8 headline formats deliver because they do a fantastic job at arousing curiosity. People always want to know what's new and exciting. And the best way to show them that you have something new and exciting is to blantly tell them.

20. Begin Your Headline with the Word "Introducing"
21. Begin Your Headline with the Word "Announcing"
22. Use Words that Have an Announcement Quality (Finally, Presenting, Just Released, etc)
23. Begin Your Headline With the Word "New"
24. Begin Your Headline With the Word "Now"
25. Begin Your Headlines With the Words "At Last"
26. Put a Date Into Your Headline
27. Write Your Headline In News Style (This one's a little redundant, focus on pushing the announcement angle)

Price Related Headlines

Be careful with price headlines, they're too easy. Marketers rely on them WAY too frequently and condition their customers to only respond to discounts. When you can only sell with discounts, you've pushed your business into a death-spiral. Keep them in your back pocket for emergencies but avoid them as often as possible.

Now, some businesses depend on low prices. Their entire business model is based on delivering the product or service cheaper than anyone else. Think Walmart and generic brands. If that's the game you've chosen to play, you'll want to display your prices every chance you get. Put them in each headline you have and hope someone hasn't figured out how to do it cheaper than you.

28. Feature the Price in Your Headline

29. Feature Reduced Price
30. Feature a Special Merchandising Offer
31. Feature an Easy Payment Plan
32. Feature a Free Offer

One to Three Word Headlines

You'll want to leave these headlines for the pros. Why? Because they still need to accomplish what the other headlines do naturally (grab attention with benefits or curiosity). But they only have 1-3 words to do it.

It's simply too easy to slip from attention grabbing to completely confusing.

Too often, marketers believe they can be pithy and cute by embodying their message into an abstract phrase or word. Usually, they just end up confusing everybody and the ad is worthless.

Remember: **don't make your copy pithy and cute**. No one will get it. They'll just think you're boring and confusing.

So approach these last 3 with extreme caution.

33. Use a One Word Headline
34. Use a Two Word Headline
35. Use a Three Word Headline

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