HEADLINES

HOW TO SIZE HEADLINES ON A PAGE

If we had to generalize about headline sizes, we could say that small headlines range from 12- to 24-point; midsize headlines range from 24- to 48-point; large headlines range upward from 48-point.

Beyond that, it's difficult to generalize about headline sizes. Some papers like them big and bold; others prefer them small and elegant. Headlines in tabloids are often smaller than headlines in broadsheets (though not always).

Still, this much is true: Since bigger stories get bigger headlines, headlines will generally get smaller as you move down the page. Here are some examples:

NUMBER OF LINES IN A HEADLINE

Traditionally, newspapers have used a coding formula for headlines that lists: 1) the column width, 2) the point size and 3) the number of lines. Using that formula, a 3-30-1 headline would be a 3-column, 30-point headline that runs on one line, like this:

Rock 'n' roll causes acne, doctor says

(Not shown actual size)

Headlines for news stories usually run on top of the text. That means a wide story needs a wide headline; a narrow story needs a narrow one. So in a narrow layout, that headline above could be rewritten as a 1-30-3 (1 column, 30-point, 3 lines deep):

Rock 'n' roll causes acne, doctor says

Since 5-10 words are optimum for most headlines, narrow stories may need 3-4 lines of headline to make sense; wide headlines can work in a line or two.

The chart below will give you an idea of how many lines usually work best:

HOW MANY LINES DOES A HEADLINE NEED?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If headline is this wide (in columns):</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Then make it this deep (in lines):</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>