

# Headline Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2025



You are a copy editor for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

Write the headline assigned for each of the given **six** stories. Use the following system: all upper and lower case letters, spaces, punctuation marks and symbols count as 1. Capitalize the first letter of the first word of each headline. You may use either upstyle (capitalizing the first letter of every word) or downstyle (capitalizing the first letter of the first word and the first letter of proper nouns only thereafter). Remember that main headlines belong on the top line and secondary headlines belong under the main headline. You have **30 minutes**. Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

## Story 1 — Write: 1-line headline counting 26-32

A group of seniors in the personal finance class will publish a research project Wednesday about the high cost of taking Advanced Placement classes. The group of five students will publish their findings on a website they created over the fall semester.

“I’ll just do a spoiler alert,” senior Ben Felds said. “It costs a student a lot more money to take an AP class than it does to take an on-level class.”

Felds said the data they collected from students, staff and the College Board found that students were spending more money to purchase special supplies and books for AP classes and that the average core AP class costs \$150.

“I didn’t even realize the classes I was taking were costing me money,” senior Jennifer Goodwin said. “But then I added up all the books I bought for AP Lit this year, and it was a lot. That doesn’t even include the cost to take the AP tests at the end of the year.”

In addition to AP classes, the school offers dual credit options.

“It’s worth it for me to take AP,” Goodwin said, “but it may not be for everyone.”

## Story 2 — Write: 2-line headline with each line counting 26-32

After families received a false safety alert notification on their phones last week, security director Mike Bennet said the district is working to prevent future accidental messages.

“We are still learning the ins and outs of our new system,” Bennet said. “One thing we are considering is putting the control to the alert system in some sort of a box or container to avoid someone accidentally triggering the alert system.”

The lockdown message, which was sent to more than 8,000 families and community members, was the fourth false alert to go out since the district implemented its new security protocol in August. The district sent another communication 10 minutes later to confirm there was no threat and that the alarm was accidentally sent out.

“When we get a safety alert on our phones now, I just assume it’s a false alarm and go back to whatever I was doing,” junior Jackson Grant said. “They need to get the system working properly, so we aren’t desensitized to it.”

## Story 3 — Write: 3-line headline with each line counting 12-18

The jazz band will perform Saturday at the South Texas Jazz Festival alongside the Houston Jazz Orchestra.

“We’ve been practicing for months now,” senior trumpet soloist James Schaffer said. “I’m looking forward to performing, but I also can’t wait to hear the other bands and see what they can do. Then we’ll hear the Houston Jazz Orchestra play at the end of the night. We have some former students in that ensemble.”

Southside High School and Northeast High School will also have soloists performing with different ensembles, but only Leaguetown’s entire jazz ensemble was invited to play.

“Jazz is a lot like life,” junior trombone player Kathryn McCutcheon said. “That’s what we always talk about in class. It’s all about a theme and variations. In my life right now, jazz is definitely one of the bigger themes.”

#### **Story 4 — Write: 1-line main headline counting 10-16 and 2-line secondary headline with each line counting 16-22**

Calculus teacher Penelope Godfried will spend Friday in the cosmetology lab having a makeover and spa day after winning the raffle from the homecoming carnival in October.

Students working toward their cosmetology certification will provide a manicure, pedicure, salon highlights and a haircut along with a hand and foot massage.

“I bought five raffle tickets at the carnival to help raise money for the South Texas Food Pantry,” Godfried said. “To be honest, I didn’t even pay attention to what all was in the prize. This is going to be awesome.”

In addition to the spa day, the school will provide a sub so Godfried can enjoy the day.

“We raised more than \$12,000 for the food pantry thanks to teachers like Ms. Godfried who chose to support our cause this year,” Student Council President Tegan Heyndricks said. “I know she’s going to have a fun day letting those cosmetology students take care of her, but we really appreciate her for always supporting our fundraisers.”

Students in the cosmetology classes work under the guidance of a licensed cosmetologist and will be certified by the end of the year after working enough hours in the salon.

“When I graduate, I’ll be ready to work in a salon,” senior Aurora Pennington said. “I’m going to take college classes in the mornings and work in a salon in the afternoons. This way, I never have to take out any loans to pay for school.”

#### **Story 5 — Write: 1-line main headline counting 8-14 and a 1-line secondary headline counting 26-32**

Fresh air and a new trail were all they needed to get through the summer. After working at Girl Scout camp, juniors Shanaiya Balar and Alexandra Benitez started the first Hiking Club, which will meet Tuesdays after school starting next week.

“I went on a hike every day this summer,” Balar said. “It didn’t matter if it was 110 degrees outside. Alexandra and I tried a different trail around the lake every day. Then after camp was over, we’d find some other trail near home. There are tons of amazing trails out there if you just look. By November, we missed our daily hikes so much, we got the idea to make it a club.”

The group will meet at the front of the school and make a plan to visit a specific trailhead in the area. Students are encouraged to wear comfortable shoes and bring lots of drinking water and a snack.

“We will start with easier one- or two-mile hikes to get more students interested,” Benitez said. “Then we’ll move on to five or six miles. Those are my favorite hikes. They take a few hours, so I’m hoping we can take our new club out to see some beautiful sunsets this spring.”

#### **Story 6 — Write: 1-line headline counting 24-30**

A new catering company took over the cafeteria’s breakfast and lunch service after winter break. Fresh Texas Foods has replaced Real Good Foods. Students will notice other changes to the cafeteria menu, procedures and pricing.

“When they come down for lunch, students may not recognize the cafeteria,” Principal Murphy Black said. “But we hope students notice an improvement in the quality of the meals they receive during lunch.”

Though the main hot food line price will remain the same, items such as snacks and pizza could cost more.

“If they’re giving us better food for the same price, I’m in,” senior Randall Fisher said. “So far the hot lunch seems a little bit better than it was. The cafeteria even smells better than it did.”

Fresh Texas Foods is installing a salad bar, stir fry line and a sandwich line, which will all open before the end of the month.

“I’m glad they finally did something because lunch has been pretty much inedible since I’ve been at this school,” junior Sophia Hsu said. “Everything tasted freezer burned or like it came out of a can. I’m looking forward to there being a real salad bar so we can actually have some decent food at lunch.”

## Invitational A Meet • 2025 Headline Writing Entry Sheet

All letters (upper and lower case), numbers, punctuation marks, symbols and spaces count as one (1). Place one letter or other unit in the appropriate spaces below. Remember to leave spaces between words. Note that the number of lines you are given on this sheet corresponds to the number of lines required for each headline. Write your number on the upper right-hand corner of this sheet.

■ Headline Number 1

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

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■ Headline Number 2

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

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■ Headline Number 3

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

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■ **Headline Number 4**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

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*main headline*

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*secondary headline*

■ **Headline Number 5**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

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*main headline*

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*secondary headline*

■ **Headline Number 6**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

**DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!**

## Invitational A Meet • 2025 Headline Writing Contest Tips and Samples

**Contest Director:** Give one copy to each judge to use during critiquing/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judges.

1. Headline writing is different than the other contests. It is suggested you pace yourself. You have about five minutes for each headline. Don't watch the clock, but be aware of the time you are taking to complete a headline. It is better to have four or five good headlines rather than six mediocre ones.
2. When writing the headline, first highlight or underline all the important words in the story. Then write a sentence based on those highlighted words.
3. After you have your first sentence, go back and begin editing out words. If you have a multi-line headline, separate the lines at a recommended area. This means you should not split phrases or ideas. Make sure all types of phrases — noun, verb, adverbial, adjective and prepositional phrases especially — are on the same line. Continue eliminating words until you get to a point where the headline fits. It may be necessary to re-write the headline one or more times or to take a different approach before you get the key idea. Remember to eliminate all unnecessary words such as article adjectives (a, an, the). In many cases a comma (,) can substitute for the word "and."
4. You may use a printed thesaurus or dictionary. You may write in upstyle or downstyle.
5. Make sure you are within the prescribed count. Under no circumstances should you be under or over the maximum count. Judges are instructed not to consider any headline under or over the prescribed count.
6. Write headlines using active verbs in either present, future or present perfect tense. Follow the style of the headline. If it is a fun story, write a fun headline. If it is a serious story, write a serious headline.
7. Do not sacrifice accuracy for creativity or cuteness.
8. Normally, the main headline is used to grab the reader's attention. It is not necessary, although it is possible, to have a verb in the main headline when you have a secondary headline. The secondary headline should do one of two things: emphasize the significant aspects of the story or emphasize the unusual.
9. AP Style provides guidelines for headline writing. It is not required for contestants to follow AP Style, but a consistent style is recommended.

The following are additional basic headline rules for you to follow:

- avoid starting the headline with a verb
- use single quotes
- avoid using the same word twice in a headline
- try to write in present or future tense
- avoid unfamiliar abbreviations
- do not end the headline with a period

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