

Headline Writing

State Meet • 2024



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 anonymous community members will surprise graduates with gift baskets beginning next week.

The Facebook group “Adopt-a-Grad Leaguetown” was created during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide a positive experience for seniors who wouldn’t have a traditional graduation. Parent of a 2020 graduate Laney Wilcox, who started the group in 2020, said the group’s mission has stayed the same.

“I created the group because I thought my daughter needed a pick-me-up,” she said. “Five years later, I still have community members wanting to adopt a senior.”

Parents submit information about their senior in the Facebook group, then community members “adopt” each student and provide a gift. The group also collects donations to provide gifts to seniors who are not selected.

“I remember my sister getting this big basket on our porch when she graduated in 2021,” senior Hailey Garcia said. “She got a fancy water bottle and a bunch of gift cards. I’m glad Leaguetown parents are keeping it going. What a way to celebrate.”

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

Seniors will receive a new class rank Friday after the district discovered an error in the system that tabulates GPA.

“When we got our final class rank notification, something didn’t look right,” senior Johnathan Dharamraj said. “I went from No. 6 in the class to No. 7. And I’m positive I was supposed to be 6. It just wasn’t what I thought it would be.”

Dharamraj calculated his GPA manually and went to tell registrar Joanie Morgan that the report was incorrect.

“Johnathan showed me his calculations,” Morgan said. “For some reason, the system added extra courses to his schedule that were shown as ‘incomplete.’ This brought down his GPA. I had never seen it do anything like that before.”

Morgan then realized the system had wrongly calculated more than 120 seniors’ grades in the final class rank report.

“I hope it doesn’t cause too many more problems,” she said. “At least I hope the top 10 in the class don’t move around too much more.”

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

To improve teacher recruitment, the district will launch a new program for future teachers in the fall. Through the “Teach for Tomorrow” program, the district will pay for high school graduates to earn a degree in education as long as they come back to teach for the district.

“It’s time to get creative,” Superintendent Felicia Spaulding said. “We’re through using COVID as our excuse for poor teacher retention and recruitment.”

Students can earn a degree in elementary or secondary education while working in an apprenticeship with a teacher. After completing the program, teachers will be required to teach for the district for a minimum of three years or pay back the district for the cost of the degree.

“This is a way for us to not only have more teachers, but also to have better teachers, more prepared teachers and teachers who already love their school,” Spaulding said. “They’ll be going back to teach in their home district.”

Story 4 — Write: 1-line main headline counting 10-16 and 2-line secondary headline with each line counting 20-26

After thunderstorms caused three postponements, administrators announced Thursday they would not reschedule Reading Fest for a fourth time.

The 12th Annual Reading Fest, originally scheduled for May 3, was an outdoor event with author meet-and-greets, book-related games, food and book exchanges for elementary, middle and high school students.

“We were very sorry to finally cancel the event,” Principal Joe Healy said. “As we head into the end of the year, there aren’t enough days on the calendar to continuously reschedule events like this. We are too close to AP testing and graduation at this point.”

For the past 12 years, student council and the high school English department have helped organize the event at the school’s practice field on a Friday in the spring. Heavy rain and lightning on May 3 and 6, as well as a tornado watch on May 10, led administrators to cancel the event.

“We’ve spent the past six weeks creating decorations and planning the games for the elementary students,” senior Mario Sosa said. “I guess we’ll save these materials for next year’s festival. Hopefully that one won’t get rained out, too.”

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

Glee, which includes the top-level choir seniors, will perform a concert entirely of Beatles music in the auditorium at 6 p.m. Friday.

Tickets for the concert cost \$5, which will go to benefit the choir program and its 2025 senior trip.

“We’ve been secretly practicing these Beatles songs all year,” Glee leader Tabitha Soren said. “I wasn’t a huge fan before this, but my parents were. I’m definitely a fan now. I have an amazing solo during ‘Golden Slumbers,’ and I can’t wait for everyone to hear it. Getting to know these songs has changed my outlook on popular music.”

The Beatles were a popular band in the 1960s whose popularity at the time is often compared to modern pop artists like Taylor Swift.

“I can see where a lot of Taylor Swift’s popular songs are influenced by the writing of Paul McCartney and John Lennon,” senior Devin Menendez said. “I have loved learning about them and making those connections.”

The group will perform eight Beatles songs, including “Penny Lane,” “With a Little Help From My Friends” and “Let It Be.” The group also watched several Beatles documentaries to learn the history and hear more of the music before selecting songs for the concert.

“I took the Glee seniors to a summer retreat in June, and we were sitting around a campfire one night talking about music when I realized these kids don’t even know The Beatles,” choir director Brook Lawrence said. “I can understand that they’re a little older than some of the music the students listen to, but The Beatles are our history. I decided it was my job to train them up.”

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

AP students will host an after-school study session May 14 to prepare students for the biology, chemistry, statistics and Calculus AB and BC tests. The event, which will be 4-8 p.m., will have food trucks and multiple teachers on hand for tutoring.

“I asked Mr. McHam if I could plan a massive study group for all the AP science tests,” senior Jennifer Choi said. “He was like ‘sure,’ but then my friend who was taking Stats wanted to be included, too. So we just decided to invite almost everyone. It’s still a study session, though — no music or games or anything like that.”

In addition to arranging food trucks, the PTA donated gift cards as door prizes for students who attend the session. The event will take place in the cafeteria.

“Every 30 minutes, they’re going to give away a gift card,” chemistry teacher Bruce McHam said. “Hopefully that will keep students there and keep them focused on getting through this material.”

Choi and McHam have divided the cafeteria into different sections for students to visit to get help on their various study materials.

“I’m grateful to Mr. McHam for helping me plan this,” Choi said. “It’s going to be fun, I think, but I just need to catch up on the last few units in chemistry and Calculus BC. I need to do well on these tests and get some college credit. I think the session can get me there.”

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

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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 thesaurus or dictionary, either bound or electronic. You may write in block letters. You should not be penalized for inconsistency in upstyle or downstyle.
5. Make sure you are within the prescribed count. Under no circumstances should you go over the maximum count. Judges are instructed to disqualify 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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