

# Headline Writing

State Meet • 2023



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 22-28

The district will begin a new partnership with South Texas University beginning next school year that will guarantee the top 40% of graduates automatic admission and a chance to win scholarships.

“It’s our job to give students every possible opportunity to succeed after high school,” head of counseling Pamala Cranmore said. “The district has been working closely with STU for years, but with this new admissions program, we hope to provide a seamless path to higher education for many of our students.”

ACT and SAT score requirements also will be waived for those students.

“I was going to apply at STU anyway, so this is awesome,” junior Max Greene said. “Now I don’t have to stress about high-stakes tests next year.”

The program guarantees admission for 268 students in the class of 2024.

“We are very proud of our ongoing relationship with STU,” Superintendent Jenna Martinez said. “They have always been supporters of our CTE programs. Now students will have a direct path to college. This is something our students deserve as they continue on their path to future success.”

## Story 2 — Write: 2-line headline with each line counting 16-22

All students will qualify for free breakfast and lunch every school day for the next five years after the district joined the state’s Community Nutrition Program.

Next school year, parents will not need to apply for free and reduced lunch. Instead, students will show their ID at the register in the lunch line to receive a free meal.

“The state will allow us to apply for special nutrition reimbursements as a result of the district’s socioeconomic status,” director of nutrition Poppy Parnell said. “We hope this will take one thing off the plates of the parents in our community.”

Freshman Julius Blarney said she likes the school lunches.

“Now I don’t need to worry about making my lunch in the morning, and I’ll sleep an extra 10 minutes every day,” she said.

Parents can still deposit money into student accounts to purchase snacks, extra drinks and other items in the cafeteria.

## Story 3 — Write: 3-line headline with each line counting 10-16

Administrators removed the app HeyYo from school computers after hackers sent explicit messages to student accounts using the app’s messaging feature. Teachers and students use the app to collaborate on school projects.

“After several reports of odd messages coming from student accounts, we determined that the messages were coming from an IP address outside the district’s network and that account information was stolen,” Chief Information Officer Al Spencer said. “We have removed the HeyYo app from all school-issued devices until the matter has been resolved.”

Sophomore Hailey Kilgo said she won’t miss using the app.

“We started using HeyYo when I was in middle school during the COVID lockdown,” she said. “It’s the most annoying thing I’ve ever had to use at school. I’m glad to have a break from it.”

#### **Story 4 — Write: 1-line main headline counting 10-16 and 2-line secondary headline with each line counting 18-24**

Running up 20 flights of stairs, breaking a wall with a sledge hammer, pulling a fire hose — these activities were all in a day's work for female athletes at the Ladder 7 training facility last week. Local firefighters invited female high school athletes to train with them on Saturday.

"This was one of the hardest things I've ever done," junior volleyball captain Journey Porchet said. "We ran up a million stairs and then had to do it again with a fire hose. I couldn't believe it. But it was cool to be able to say we did it when the whole thing was over."

Firefighters and participants raised almost \$800 from spectators for the Leaguetown Food Pantry.

"We had a blast," Porchet said. "But it also felt great to help people in the community. Hopefully having collection boxes at the event made a difference for those in need."

Fire chief Eric LaSalle said he would happily hire some of the participants.

"These athletes performed right there with our fire teams," he said. "They showed strength and stamina, and I'd be happy to have any of them on one of our teams in the future."

#### **Story 5 — Write: 1-line main headline counting 10-16 and a 1-line secondary headline counting 22-28**

Memes go viral on social media every day, but for sophomore Alex VandenBush, going viral wasn't the only goal. He wanted to win \$500. And he did.

Alex won that \$500 in the International Youth Meme contest, sponsored by Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram.

"I make memes all the time just to see how far they'll go," VandenBush said. "A lot of them get popular with people at our school. Sometimes I'll do a TikTok that I'll see repeated or reposted a few thousand times. When I heard about the contest, I thought it might be something I'd be good at."

Participants were given a topic and had 48 hours to produce the most viral meme. Meta judged winners on how many likes and shares each meme received on Facebook or Instagram.

"We had to make a meme about high school sports," VandenBush said. "I didn't think mine was all that funny, but it was shared more than 400,000 times in 48 hours."

VandenBush said he plans to save the \$500 for college expenses.

"I'm not sure if I have what it takes to make a career in making memes," he said. "But this cash is a good start."

#### **Story 6 — Write: 2-line headline counting 22-28**

Students and teachers were on a "safety lockout" for an hour after school Monday after administrators noticed unusual wildlife outside the front doors of the school. But after a phone call to animal control and a short investigation by school resource officers, administrators lifted the lockdown and revealed what caused the concern — a life-sized plastic alligator.

"It's not unusual to see small pranks this time of year," Principal Natalie Mays said. "We checked cameras, and it was difficult to tell who left the toy alligator or if it was an accident or a prank. I know it was inconvenient for everyone, but we were relieved that it was fake."

Rumors spread on social media during the lockout.

"They came on the PA and said there was a safety threat that was wildlife-related, and that we would have to stay put in last period until further notice," senior Tabitha Swanson said. "I was late to work, but at least it was a funny reason. People had all kinds of guesses as to what wildlife could be causing that."

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**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

■ 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

■ 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

■ **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

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**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
- always 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

## ★ STORY #1

University to admit top 40% 27

## ★ STORY #2

District joins program 22  
to offer free meals 19

## ★ STORY #3

School bans app 15  
after hackers 13  
steal accounts 14

## ★ STORY #4

**Hose heroes** 11  
Athletes fundraise, 19  
train with firefighters 23

## ★ STORY #5

**Memes to an end** 15  
Student wins \$500 in contest 28

## ★ STORY #6

Plastic gator scares campus, 28  
takes bite out of afternoon 27