

# The 100 Greatest Headlines Ever Written

By Jay Abraham

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## **1. THE SECRET OF MAKING PEOPLE LIKE YOU**

Almost \$500,000 was spent profitably to run keyed ads displaying this headline. It drew many hundreds of thousands of readers into the body matter of a "people-mover" advertisement --- one which, by itself, built a big business. Pretty irresistible, isn't it?

## **2. A LITTLE MISTAKE THAT COST A FARMER \$3,000 A YEAR**

A sizable appropriation was spent successfully in farm magazines on this ad. Sometimes the negative idea of offsetting, reducing, or eliminating the "risk of loss" is even more attractive to the reader than the "prospect of gain."

As the great business executive Chauncey Depew once said, "I would not stay up all of one night to make \$100; but I would stay up all of seven nights to keep from losing it." As Walter Norvath says in *Six Successful Selling Techniques*, "People will fight much harder to avoid losing something they already own than to gain something of greater value that they do not own." It is also true that they have the feeling that losses and waste can often be more easily retrieved than new profits can be gained.

What farmer could pass up reading the copy under such a headline --- to find out: "What was the mistake? Why was it 'little'? Am I making it? If it cost a farmer a loss of \$3,000 a year, maybe it's costing me a lot more? Perhaps the copy will also tell me about other mistakes I might be making."

## **3. ADVICE TO WIVES WHOSE HUSBANDS DON'T SAVE MONEY --- BY A WIFE**

The headline strength of the word "advice" has often been proven. Most people want it, regardless of whether or not they follow it. And the particular "ailment" referred to is common enough to interest a lot of readers. The "it happened to me" tag line, "by a wife," increases the desire to read the copy. (This ad far outpulled the advertiser's previous best ad, *Get Rid of Money Worries*.)

## **4. THE CHILD WHO WON THE HEARTS OF ALL**

This was a key-result ad which proved spectacularly profitable. It appeared in women's magazines. The emotional-type copy described (and the photograph portrayed) the kind of little girl any parent would want their daughter to be. Laughing, rollicking, running forward with arms outstretched, right out of the ad and into the arms and heart of the reader.

## **5. ARE YOU EVER TONGUE-TIED AT A PARTY?**

Pinpoints the myriads of self-conscious, inferiority-complexed wallflowers. "That's me! I want to read this ad; maybe it tells me exactly what to do about it."

As you go along, you will notice how many of these headlines are interrogative ones. They ask a question to which people want to read the answer. They excite curiosity and interest in the body matter which follows. They hit home --- cut through verbose indirectness. The best ones are challenges, which are difficult to ignore, cannot be dismissed with a quick no or yes and without further reading, are pertinent and relevant to the reader. Note how many of the ones included here measure up to these specifications.

## **6. HOW A NEW DISCOVERY MADE A PLAIN GIRL BEAUTIFUL**

Wide appeal; there are more plain girls than beautiful ones --- and just about all of them want to be better looking.

## **7. HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE**

This helped to sell millions of copies of the book of the same title. Strong basic appeal; we will all want to do it. But without the words "how to" the headline would become simply a trite wall motto.

## **8. THE LAST 2 HOURS ARE THE LONGEST --- AND THOSE ARE THE 2 HOURS YOU SAVE**

An airline ad featured a faster jet-powered flight. Headline is a bull's-eye for air-experienced travelers who know what those last two interminable hours can do to their nerves and patience. Like many fine headlines, it doubtless came right out of the personal experience of its writer. This headline (and all the others discussed here) would have been good even if it had not been supported by any picture at all. But its effect was heightened by a photo of a wristwatch with the hour marks indicating 1 to 10 bunched together --- and 10, 11, and 12 stretched wide apart.

## **9. WHO ELSE WANTS A SCREEN STAR FIGURE?**

Who doesn't? Except men --- and this successful and much-fun ad is not addressed to them. "Who else" also has a "get on the bandwagon" connotation: not "Can it be done?" but "Who else wants to have it?"

## **10. DO YOU MAKE THESE MISTAKES IN ENGLISH?**

A direct challenge. Now read the headline back, eliminating the vital word "these." This word is the "hook" that almost forces you into the copy. "What are these particular mistakes? Do I make them?" Also notice (as with many of the other headline reviewed) that this one promised to provide helpful personal information in its own context, not merely "advertising talk."

The attraction of the Specific: In this first breather let us stop to impress upon your mind how significant a part the "specific" plays in so many good headlines. It appears in many of our first ten. And it will appear in a surprising number of the next ninety. You will see how magnetically it helps to draw the reader into the body matter of an advertisement. So notice, as you continue reading, how many of these headlines contain specific words or phrases that make the ad promise to tell you: How, Here's, These, Which of these, Who Else, Where, When, What, Why. Also, note frequently exact amounts are used: number of days, evenings, hours, minutes, dollars, ways, types of. This "attraction of the specific" is worth your special attention --- not only as relating to words and phrases, but also concerning headline ideas themselves. For example, compare the appeal of "We'll Help You Make More Money" with "We'll Help You Pay the Rent."

## **11. WHY SOME FOODS "EXPLODE" IN YOUR STOMACH**

A provocative "why" headline. Based upon the completely understandable fact that some food combinations virtually "explode" in the stomach. Broad appeal. (Relevant picture of chemical retort shaped like a stomach, starting to explode.)

## **12. HANDS THAT LOOK LOVELIER IN 24 HOURS --- OR YOUR MONEY BACK**

Universal appeal to women. Result guaranteed: "Or Your Money Back."

## **13. YOU CAN LAUGH AT MONEY WORRIES --- IF YOU FOLLOW THIS SIMPLE PLAN**

Something everybody wants to be able to do. A successful keyed ad upon which many thousands have been spent.

## **14. WHY SOME PEOPLE ALMOST ALWAYS MAKE MONEY IN THE STOCK MARKET**

A profitable check-results ad selling a book written by a partner in a well-known and highly regarded brokerage house. Important key words: "some" and "almost" --- which make the headline credible.

## **15. WHEN DOCTORS "FEEL ROTTEN" THIS IS WHAT THEY DO**

What's the secret of the success of this well-known ad? First: the suggestion of a paradox. We seldom think of doctors as being in poor health themselves. And when they are, what they do about it is information "right from the horse's mouth"; carries a note of authority and greater assurance of "reward for reading the ad." Note the positive promise of reward in "This Is What They Do."

Also, the use of the unabashed colloquialism "feel rotten" gets attention, sounds human, natural. Besides, it has surprise value --- since the vocabulary of the advertising pages has a certain sameness and stilted quality. Many a headline fails to stop readers because its vocabulary is so hackneyed. No word or phrase in it has any attention-arresting element of surprise, no words, expressions, or ideas not commonly used or expected in the headline of an advertisement. This ad pulled only half the number of responses when a test was made changing "When Doctors Feel Rotten" to "When Doctors Don't Feel Up To Par." (Other examples of the use of common colloquialisms and words are given, and commented upon, in many of these good headlines.)

Since the idea of using headline words not commonly utilized in the lexicon of advertising is worth such serious consideration, let us cite a few more examples. For a book on scientific weight control: the one word "Pot-Belly"! (Not very elegant, but it proved an effective stopper.) For a dictionary: a single word (onion, hog, shad, pelican, skunk, kangaroo, etc.) as the boldface headline of each in a series of small-space advertisements. You couldn't miss it on the page and you wanted to know what it was all about. The copy followed through by illustrating how simple and clear the definitions were in that particular dictionary. For a book of golf instruction: "Don't Belly-Ache About Your Golf This Year!"

## **16. IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE THAT YOU CAN OFFER THESE SIGNED ORIGINAL ETCHINGS --- FOR ONLY \$5 EACH**

Anticipates the reader's natural incredulity concerning such an exceptional bargain. Thus helping to overcome his doubt in advance, by acknowledging the likelihood of it.

### **17. FIVE FAMILIAR SKIN TROUBLES --- WHICH DO YOU WANT TO OVERCOME?**

"Let me keep reading --- to see if I have one of the five." The old "which of these" selling technique; not "do you want?" but "which do you want?" (Interrogative headline helps entice readers into the copy. Note how many of these hundred are interrogative headlines.)

### **18. WHICH OF THESE \$2.50 TO \$5 BEST SELLERS DO YOU WANT --- FOR ONLY \$1 EACH?**

This keyed ad sold hundreds of thousands of books. Strong comparative-price bargain appeal.

### **19. WHO EVER HEARD OF A WOMAN LOSING WEIGHT --- AND ENJOYING 3 DELICIOUS MEALS AT THE SAME TIME?**

Another example of a headline which anticipates incredulity in order to help overcome it.

### **20. HOW I IMPROVED MY MEMORY IN ONE EVENING**

This is the famous "Addison Sims of Seattle" ad which coined that household phrase. Could you escape wanting to read it?

### **21. DISCOVER THE FORTUNE THAT LIES HIDDEN IN YOUR SALARY**

One of those good "discover what lies hidden" headlines. (Note others here.) A proven puller for an advertiser offering sound securities on a "pay out of income" basis.

### **22. DOCTORS PROVE 2 OUT OF 3 WOMEN CAN HAVE MORE BEAUTIFUL SKIN IN 14 DAYS**

Women want it. "Why two out of three? Am I one of the two? How have doctors proven it? Quick results are what I want....Only fourteen days!"

How Many Words Should a Headline Contain? ...You have probably often read about the desirability of having no more than a certain number of words in your headline. Yet, in this second breather, we want to point out that many of the headlines already quoted (and others to follow) are, by ordinary standards, quite long. Yet, despite their length, they were successful. Obviously, it is not wise to make a headline any lengthier than its primary function actually requires. However, greater-than-usual length need not worry you...provided the headline's high spots of interest are physically well broken up and clearly displayed --- and provided the personal advantages promised to the reader are presented so oppositely that it is almost as though his own name appeared in the headline. Worth recounting is the story of Max Hart (of Hart, Schaffner and Marx) and his advertising manager, the late and great George L. Dyer. They were arguing about long copy. To clinch the argument Mr. Dyer said, "I'll bet you \$10 I can write a newspaper page of solid types and you'd read every word of it." Mr. Hart scoffed at the idea. "I don't have to write a line of it to prove my point," Mr. Dyer responded. "I'll only tell you the headline: "This page is all about Max Hart!"

### **23. HOW I MADE A FORTUNE WITH A "FOOL IDEA"**

Paradoxes excite interest. Broad appeal: almost everyone has once had a pet moneymaking idea that others have thought foolish and impractical. Sympathy for the underdog: "What's the story of this man who 'turned the tables' on the people who ridiculed him?"

**24. HOW OFTEN DO YOU HEAR YOURSELF SAYING: "NO, I HAVEN'T READ IT: I'VE BEEN MEANING TO!"**

A well-known book club has spent a great deal of money on this ad. Headline aimed accurately at large market --- people who "mean to" keep up with the new books but somehow "never get around to it."

**25. THOUSANDS HAVE THIS PRICELESS GIFT --- BUT NEVER DISCOVER IT!**

"What 'priceless gift'? Why is it 'priceless'? If 'thousands' have it, perhaps I should have it too." The "undiscovered" angle has great attraction. Legions of people are convinced that they possess talents and abilities which others have never discovered. Consequently, their world is unfortunately inclined to underrate or misjudge them.

**26. WHOSE FAULT WHEN CHILDREN DISOBEY?**

What parent wouldn't be stopped cold by this headline? "I'm the one who's probably to blame. It's a distressing condition --- and, most important, a reflection upon me. Maybe this ad tells me what to do about it."

**27. HOW A "FOOL STUNT" MADE ME A STAR SALESMAN**

What is the 'fool stunt'? Why did people call it that? How did it transform this fellow? I'd like to be able to 'sell' myself and my ideas --- even though selling may not be my vocation.") A large expenditure was made profitably on this ad after its resentfulness had been proven.)

**28. HAVE YOU THESE SYMPTOMS OF NERVE EXHAUSTION?**

Everyone likes to read about his "symptoms." The appeal is broad; the condition of "nerve exhaustion" is common.

**29. GUARANTEED TO GO THROUGH ICE, MUD OR SNOW --- OR WE PAY THE TOW!**

If you offer a powerful guarantee with your product, play it up strongly and quickly in the headline. Don't relegate it to minor display. Many products are actually backed up by dramatic guarantees - but their advertising does not make the most of them.

**30. HAVE YOU A "WORRY" STOCK?**

"Perhaps this ad will tell me why I need not lose any sleep over it --- or how I can replace it with one that will zoom."

**31. HOW A NEW KIND OF CLAY IMPROVED MY COMPLEXION IN 30 MINUTES**

Promises a desirable reward for reading. And the true experience of another person (with something relevant to our own desires) is always interesting.

**32. 161 NEW WAYS TO A MAN'S HEART --- IN THIS FASCINATING BOOK FOR COOKS**

Again, the attraction of the specific --- tied up with a strong basic appeal.

### **33. PROFITS THAT LIE HIDDEN IN YOUR FARM**

Widely run in farm papers, with exceptional results. The hidden-profit ideas and the suggestion of retrieving a loss.

### **34. IS THE LIFE OF A CHILD WORTH \$1 TO YOU?**

Trenchant headline for a brake-relining service. Strong emotional appeal: how the life of a little child may be snuffed out by an accident due to your ineffective brakes.

### **35. EVERYWHERE WOMEN ARE RAVING ABOUT THIS AMAZING NEW SHAMPOO!**

The colloquial: "raving about." The "success" word: "everywhere." (The increasing popularity and sale of a product are adduced as evidence of its merit. "Nothing succeeds like success"; and people love to climb on a bandwagon.) And the overworked "amazing" still seems to have some power left.

### **36. DO YOU DO ANY OF THESE TEN EMBARRASSING THINGS?**

Bull's-eye question. All of us are afraid of embarrassing ourselves before others: being criticized, looked down upon, talked about. "Which 'ten' are they? Do I do any of them?"

### **37. SIX TYPES OF INVESTOR --- WHICH GROUP ARE YOU IN?**

This ad produced inquiries in large quantities. Investors reviewed the characteristics of each of the six groups, as described in the ad, then inquired about a program designed to meet the investment purposes of their particular group.

The Primary Viewpoint --- The "Point of You" ... Breather No. 3 is a short one because you already know the "lesson" very well. But to stress its importance, let us point this out to you: 43 of these 100 headlines contain one of these actual words --- "you", "your", or "yourself." Even when the pronoun is first person singular (for example, "How I Improved My Memory in One Evening"), the reward promised is so universally desired that it is, in effect, really saying, "You can do it, too!" Thousands of words have already been written about the "point of you" -- - but let me remind you that, given a fountain pen, 96 percent of 500 college women wrote their own names; shown a map of the USA, 447 men out of 500 looked first for the location of their home towns! Howard Barnes, of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association, really was on target when he said: "To call up an image of the reader, all you need to do is pin up a target. Then, starting at the outside, you can label his interests in this order: the world, the United States, his home state, his home town, and we'll lump together in the black center his family and himself....me. Myself. I come first. I am the bull's-eye.

### **38. HOW TO TAKE OUT STAINS...USE (PRODUCT NAME) AND FOLLOW THESE EASY DIRECTIONS**

An example of a good "service" ad --- one which, besides being relevantly tied up with the product, also contains helpful information usable in itself. (Such ads often have considerable longevity because they are cut out and used for future reference.)

### **39. TODAY...ADD \$10,000 TO YOUR ESTATE --- FOR THE PRICE OF A NEW HAT**

Who wouldn't want to do that? Doubt as to the promise if offset by the fact that the advertiser is a large and reputable insurance company.

#### **40. DOES YOUR CHILD EVER EMBARRASS YOU?**

Direct, challenging, a common circumstance. Brings up a flood of recollections. How can such unpleasant experiences be avoided in the future? Based upon a strong selfish appeal. Parents, are first, individuals; second, parents. The kind of reflection that children cast upon the prestige and self-esteem of their parents is a useful copy angle to remember. (This headline is the negative opposite of No. 4, The Child Who Won the Hearts of All.)

#### **41. IS YOUR HOME PICTURE-POOR?**

A rifle-shot question hitting thousands of readers. Illustrated by a photo of an otherwise attractive living room with blank areas on its walls; with X's indicating where pictures would improve the room's appearance.

#### **42. HOW TO GIVE YOUR CHILDREN EXTRA IRON --- THESE 3 DELICIOUS WAYS**

It obeys the wise maxim of newspaper reporters: "Start where the reader is." In other words, the public already accepts the fact that children's blood should contain plenty of iron. So the headline goes on from there --- promising "extra" iron and "3 delicious ways" to get it ("delicious" ways; so not the common parent vs. child battle).

#### **43. TO PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WRITE --- BUT CAN'T GET STARTED**

Unerringly selects its audience, which is large --- and stymied.

#### **44. THIS ALMOST-MAGICAL LAMP LIGHTS HIGHWAY TURNS BEFORE YOU MAKE THEM**

The word "almost" lends believability. Headline promises an automatic no-effort method of relieving an annoying condition or avoiding a dangerous emergency.

#### **45. THE CRIMES WE COMMIT AGAINST OUR STOMACHS**

Another "start where the reader is" headline --- because most people already believe they often give their digestive process some pretty rough treatment. This rapport, between the theme of the ad and the common belief of its readers, makes the "we" and "our" practically equal in effectiveness to "you" and "your."

#### **46. THE MAN WITH THE "GRASSHOPPER MIND"**

An immediate association with himself leaps to the mind of the reader. He wants to check at once on the personal parallel. What are the symptoms? Starting things one never finishes? Jumping from one thing to another.

"How much am I like him? It's not a good trait. What did he do about it?" This is an example of a negative headline that strikes home more accurately and dramatically than would a positive one.



**47. THEY LAUGHED WHEN I SAT DOWN AT THE PIANO --- BUT WHEN I STARTED TO PLAY!**

Another one that has entered our language. Sympathy with the underdog. Particularly interesting, structurally, as an example of a headline which "turns the corner" by using a final tag line to make itself positive instead of negative.

Also worth remembering: the before-and-after angle can be effective in many headlines.

**48. THROW AWAY YOUR OARS!**

Short and positive commands often make good stopper headlines. When Ole Evinrude, the outboard-motor king, ran a small ad with this headline, he took the first step toward building his one-room machine shop into a big business. (A similar headline, Throw Away Your Aerial! was also once responsible for building a business in the radio field.) This type of headline is worth thinking about when the product you are advertising eliminates the need for some, heretofore, necessary piece of equipment, some onerous job, or some sizable item of expense.

**49. HOW TO DO WONDERS WITH A LITTLE LAND!**

A successful headline which pulled 75 percent better than "Two Acres and Security" and 40 percent better than A Little Land --- a Lot of Living. The reason: "how to" and "do wonders with."

**50. WHO ELSE WANTS LIGHTER CAKE --- IN HALF THE MIXING TIME?**

Strong appeal. Another good "who else" headline. (No 9, Who Else Wants A Screen Star Figure?)

**51. LITTLE LEAKS THAT KEEP MEN POOR**

A keyed "retrieving a loss" ad whose checked resultfulness justified frequent repetition.

**52. PIERCED BY 301 NAILS....RETAINS FULL AIR PRESSURE**

Who wouldn't be interested in reading more about a tire like this?

**53. NO MORE BACKBREAKING GARDEN CHORES FOR ME --- YET OURS IS NOW THE SHOW-PLACE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD!**

A good example of a before-and-after headline which makes the turn from negative to positive. Also worth noting: it has an effective element of excitement in it --- a feature of many good headlines, communicating the copywriter's enthusiasm to the printed page.

Don't Worry about a "Negative" Approach...This breather No. 4 is about negative headlines. "Accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative," said a song of some years ago. For years that has also been the popular refrain on the advice often given to copywriters. Discussion about negative headlines has sometimes sparked more fire than enlightenment. Yet our 100 headlines then become positive. So the negative approach must have some good reason for existence. It has. What is it? One of the principal objectives of a headline is to strike as directly as possible right at a situation confronting the reader. Sometimes you can do this with greater accuracy if you use a negative headline which pinpoints the ailment rather than the alleviation of it. (For example, Is YOUR Home Picture-Poor? Have YOU a "Worry Stock" --- Little Leaks That Keep Men Poor.) So when you face that kind of situation don't be afraid to

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"accentuate the negative." Let's proceed to another great headline which captured a place in our everyday language.

**54. OFTEN A BRIDESMAID, NEVER A BRIDE**

So poignantly true, so pointed --- and so common.

**55. HOW MUCH IS "WORKER TENSION" COSTING YOUR COMPANY?**

An ad which was successful in business magazines reaching executives. "I want to know which are the kinds of 'worker tension' specifically. What is 'worker tension' costing other companies in net profits? How much is it costing us? If it is, what can we do about it?"

**56. TO MEN WHO WANT TO QUIT WORK SOMEDAY**

Selects its readers without wasting a word. (And who can say that the Audience isn't kind of large?)

**57. HOW TO PLAN YOUR HOUSE TO SUIT YOURSELF**

This pulled almost 20% better than How to Avoid These Mistakes in Planning Your Home. Apparently, people expect the architect to avoid the mistakes --- but feel that they themselves know better than anyone else what will best suit their particular needs and preferences.

**58. BUY NO DESK --- UNTIL YOU'VE SEEN THIS SENSATION OF THE BUSINESS SHOW**

Strong "stopper" type of "command" headline, adaptable for many uses. Copy quickly follows with "until you have checked as to whether it has this feature, and this one, and this..."

**59. CALL BACK THESE GREAT MOMENTS AT THE OPERA**

Sometimes it's a good idea to "start where the reader was." This nostalgic headline was used to sell phonograph records of great operas. The ideas can be used in a positive way: typing up with a desirable remembrance. Or it can be used negatively: contrasting a certain new product advantage with an undesirable remembrance.

**60. "I LOST MY BULGES...AND SAVED MONEY, TOO"**

World "bulges" is a stopper, not commonly used in advertising lexicon. Double-edged appeal: the promise to end an unwanted condition and to save you money, also.

**61. WHY (BRAND NAME) BULBS GIVE MORE LIGHT THIS YEAR**

This one illustrates an important point, one which many advertisers hate to swallow. It is usually not a good idea to tell the name of the company (or the brand name) in the headline -- or to make it tell too much of the story. When this is done right in the headline itself, it often gives the whole thing away and does not tempt the reader into the copy. However, as is this case, when the advertiser is a nationally famous company (particularly when it is noted for its enterprise, innovations, improvements, and research), the use of the company, brand name can add news value to the headline --- and help to substantiate the truth of the claim made in it.

## **62. RIGHT AND WRONG FARMING METHODS --- AND LITTLE POINTERS THAT WILL INCREASE YOUR PROFITS**

Exceedingly profitable in farm papers. A combination of negative and positive appeals, worth a lot of "come hither" for farmers.

## **63. NEW CAKE-IMPROVER GETS YOU COMPLIMENTS GALORE!**

There are three things which advertising can tell its readers: (1) what the product is; (2) what it does; and...this headline utilizes the third (and often overlooked) one: (3) In terms of the advertisers, it is this: What other people will say of you, think of you, do for you --- how they will admire you, envy you, imitate you --- because of what my product can accomplish for you. In terms of the prospective customer it is this: Because of what your product can do for me, people may think more of me! This third factor (which is an extension of the No. 2 factor mentioned above) can be made so effective, and is so often neglected that it rates special attention here as Breather No. 5. The proper use of it can make advertising copy make more sales.

Therefore, it is worth a prominent niche in your memory. To keep it there, visualize a somewhat ridiculous picture. (Tying up an absurd pictorial association with a concept you want to remember is, of course, a well-known aid to memory.) The sketch is of a boy sitting on the prow of a PT boat. His mother is sitting in the stern. Between the two the initials "PT" are printed in big letters on the side of this type of small, but very fast, patrol boat used so extensively in World War II in the South Pacific. This mental picture will help you remember the initials "BOY PT MOM." And these are the initials of the phrase, "Because Of You, People Think More Of Me." Headline No. 63 utilizes that factor. It promises the reader that this new cake improver will win her compliments from others; that because of you (the advertiser) other people will think more of her (the reader). You are offering to show her how to make what she might later call her "reputation cake." Sometimes this element in copy is called the "prestige factor," and is considered only as an extension of the "what the product does" type of copy. (In discussing the advertising of ladies' perfumes Hal Stebbins calls it persuasive, so compelling, that it rates at least a subcategory of its own.

## **64. IMAGINE ME...HOLDING AN AUDIENCE SPELLBOUND FOR 30 MINUTES**

A profitable narrative-ad headline. Broad interest in this kind of ability. Narrator's surprise and apparent humility lend credence and humanness to the statement.

## **65. THIS IS MARIE ANTOINETTE --- RIDING TO HER DEATH**

An often-repeated ad for a set of books. It pulled eight times as many responses in 1/4-page size as were ever received from a double-spread. This is the only straight "curiosity" headline included here. Its headline was relevant --- not, as so commonly used, one of those trick devices to force attention when advertising a product not closely related to the headline.

## **66. DID YOU EVER SEE A "TELEGRAM" FROM YOUR HEART?**

A real stopper of a headline, with a great deal of lure in the copy. Top picture shows a cardiogram report printed upon a Western Union telegram form.

## **67. NOW ANY AUTO REPAIR JOB CAN BE "DUCK SOUP" FOR YOU**

What do you know --- the words "duck soup" in an ad? But doesn't it tell the story in a more unusual way than would "easy," "simple," or some such word --- particularly to the type of market to which this ad is aimed?

**68. NEW SHAMPOO LEAVES YOUR HAIR SMOOTHER --- EASIER TO MANAGE**

A result that all women want is clearly and persuasively stated. Word "leaves" makes it sound effortless.

**69. IT'S A SHAME FOR YOU NOT TO MAKE GOOD MONEY --- WHEN THESE MEN DO IT SO EASILY**

The colloquial "it's a shame." Sympathetic understanding of the reader: "You are as capable as these other men." (Headline, of course, is supported by photos and good testimonials.)

**70. YOU NEVER SAW SUCH LETTERS AS HARRY AND I GOT ABOUT OUR PEARS**

Friendly, human, disarmingly ingenuous, refreshingly non-"advertisy" in language. And, of course, the reference to "such letters."

**71. THOUSANDS NOW PLAY WHO NEVER THOUGHT THEY COULD**

A headline perennially profitable for a large music school. Again, the copy is crammed with testimonials and references substantiating the claim.

**72. GREAT NEW DISCOVERY KILLS KITCHEN ODORS QUICK! --- MAKES INDOOR AIR "COUNTRY-FRESH"**

The headline of an ad that launched a big business. Faces a common problem head-on; offers an easy and pleasant solution.

**73. MAKE THIS 1-MINUTE TEST --- OF AN AMAZING NEW KIND OF SHAVING CREAM**

The "make this test" angle has been used in many good headlines. It is widely usable for others. Its purpose is to induce the reader to participate in a demonstration of the product's merits. However, if credible and dramatic, the test can represent a persuasive demonstration whether or not the reader ever actually makes it.

**74. ANNOUNCING...THE NEW EDITION OF THE ENCYCLOPEDIA THAT MAKES IT FUN TO LEARN THINGS**

The "announcement" type of headline (when bring out a new product) wins attention because people are interested in new things.

Neophobia? --- Americans Don't Suffer From This Ailment! ...Breather No. 6 is here to remind you that in a great many of these headlines you find the word new --- or connotation of it, such as "new kind of," "new discover," "new way to," etc. Americans are partial to the new or novel; they do not suffer from neophobia. To them the mere factor of newness seems to be prima facie evidence of "betterness."

Undeviating affection for the old and tried may be strong in other countries; in ours the desire to try the new is stronger. The great achievements of our inventors and enterprising manufacturers have trained us to believe that if it's new, it's likely to be better. However, the word "new" in a headline should be backed up by copy pointing out the merits of something

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really new and advantageous, not some transparently trivial difference. And now we come to another familiar headline...

**75. AGAIN SHE ORDERS... "A CHICKEN SALAD, PLEASE"**

You still hear it quoted. It sold hundreds of thousands of copies of an etiquette book because it capsulated a common and embarrassing situation.

**76. FOR THE WOMAN WHO IS OLDER THAN SHE LOOKS**

This headline was a stopper to thousands...and more successful than the subtly different "For the Woman Who Looks Younger Than She Is."

**77. WHERE YOU CAN GO IN A GOOD USED CAR**

The headline of an excellent advertisement which featured what the product does --- rather than what it is. It appeared years ago, before practically everyone owned an automobile. Underneath the headline was a picture of the Indiana Sand Dunes, followed by good copy about the dunes and pointing out that "A good used car brings the whole country to you and yours. Why not buy one? You don't need a lot of money." Finally, after selling the idea, the copy gave some specific details about the cars which were for sale.

**78. CHECK THE KIND OF BODY YOU WANT**

Check list displayed at top immediately invites reader's participation in specifying "which of these" improvements he would like to make in his physique. Keyed ad repeated frequently by well-known physical culturist.

**79. "YOU KILL THAT STORY --- OR I'LL RUN YOU OUT OF THE STATE!"**

A true narrative ad run by a nationwide chain of newspapers. Could you flip over the page without wanting to know what happened?

**80. HERE'S A QUICK WAY TO BREAK UP A COLD**

In simple everyday words, a direct promise to end an undesirable condition --- quickly.

**81. THERE'S ANOTHER WOMAN WAITING FOR EVERY MAN --- AND SHE'S TOO SMART TO HAVE "MORNING MOUTH"**

Had quite an impact on women readers, this toothpaste ad. Obviously, for there surely is a lot of motivation in its theme: "No woman wants her husband to carry the memory of her morning breath to work with him. The attractive women he meets during the day don't have it."

Stale News to the Advertiser May Be Fresh News to the Reader...And now we come to Breather No. 7. Don't think that because it is our last one it is of least importance. In fact, its value becomes apparent when you realize how many of these headlines employ it. "Get news (or new value) into your headline" is probably the best way to define it. Since you can't pack everything into a headline, stick to your principal appeal --- but give it news value if you can. And remember that what may be stale news to the advertiser may be fresh news to the reader. The advertiser is, of course, thoroughly familiar with his manufacturing methods, the ingredients he uses, the function of his product. They may have no news value for him. They may even be similar to those of his competitors. But that is not true of the readers of his advertisements. Something about the product or the service it renders may be entirely new and sensationally persuasive to the public. And the advertiser who features it first captures its

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appeal for himself, regardless of the "me too" efforts of competitors who may have, heretofore, failed to capitalize upon it.

**82. THIS PEN "BURPS" BEFORE IT DRINKS --- BUT NEVER AFTERWARDS!**

Headline expressed in a few words a copy theme credited with pushing one brand of fountain pen up to a leading position.

**83. IF YOU WERE GIVEN \$200,000 TO SPEND --- ISN'T THIS THE KIND OF (TYPE OF PRODUCT, BUT NOT BRAND NAME) YOU WOULD BUILD?**

A "self-incriminating" (and widely applicable) way to have the reader help to specify what he himself would value most in such a product. The copy follows through along these lines: Surely you would put this feature into it. You would be sure that it brought you this advantage, and this, and this...Well, we've done it all for you. As you can see, this product was really created for you!

**84. "LAST FRIDAY...WAS I SCARED!---MY BOSS ALMOST FIRED ME!"**

A human narrative people wanted to read because it did --- or could --- "happen to me."

**85. 76 REASONS WHY IT WOULD HAVE PAID YOU TO ANSWER OUR AD A FEW MONTHS AGO**

An interesting example of an ad that backtracks --- pointing out in detail what the reader missed by not buying the product before. A frequently repeated ad used by a well-known news magazine to pull for subscriptions.

**86. SUPPOSE THIS HAPPENED ON YOUR WEDDING DAY!**

A profitable narrative-ad headline which makes it pretty hard to flip the page. "What was this tragic happening? Could it --- or did it --- happen to me?"

**87. DON'T LET ATHLETE'S FOOT "LAY YOU UP"**

This pulled three times better than Relieve Foot Itch. It gives the disease a relevant name, points out unwanted effects.

**88. ARE THEY BEING PROMOTED RIGHT OVER YOUR HEAD?**

Another question aimed at a big target: the legion of frustrated, discouraged people who feel that their ability and conscientiousness are not being amply rewarded by recognition and advancement. (Frequently run by an educational institution which checks the resultfulness of its advertisements.)

**89. ARE WE A NATION OF LOWBROWS?**

This headline helped to sell inexpensive editions of the classics, by the hundreds of thousands. It starts where the reader is --- because we, as a nation, are not reputed to be greatly addicted to the highbrow type of literature.

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Yet this successful campaign showed that Americans know very well the difference between the meritorious and meretricious --- and, if challenged, can prove it with orders. The "we" angle avoids the accusatory "you."

**90. A WONDERFUL TWO YEARS' TRIP AT FULL PAY --- BUT ONLY MEN WITH IMAGINATION CAN TAKE IT**

This ad about a course for businessmen was repeated again and again, for a period of seven years, in a long list of magazines. It offers a worthwhile reward for reading --- with an intriguing challenge in its second line.

**91. WHAT EVERYBODY OUGHT TO KNOW...ABOUT THIS STOCK AND BOND BUSINESS**

The headline of a full-page newspaper ad crammed solid with small-size type --- and nary a single picture! It drew 5,000 replies when first published, has since appeared in more than 150 newspapers. Promised helpful information of interest to a large audience. A big investment house ran the ad.

**92. MONEY-SAVING BARGAINS FROM AMERICA'S DIAMOND DISCOUNT HOUSE**

Of course the "bargain appeal" is a sure-fire --- and this is a good example of straightforward presentation.

**93. FORMER BARBER EARNS \$8,000 IN 4 MONTHS AS A REAL ESTATE SPECIALIST**

Featuring an actual testimonial can make a good headline. In this case, the reader's first reaction is "if a barber can do it maybe I can, too!"

**94. FREE BOOK --- TELLS YOU 12 SECRETS OF BETTER LAWN CARE**

If you are offering something entirely free (such as a booklet or sample) --- and want requests for it in quantity --- feature it right in your headline.

**95. GREATEST GOLD-MINE OF EASY "THINGS-TO-MAKE" EVER CRAMMED INTO ONE BIG BOOK**

Perhaps you have a new product (or even an old one) and still lack sufficient accurate data as to which, specifically, are the strongest selling appeals to feature in your advertising. In that case, it is often good strategy to "merchandise" the multi-purpose "coverage" of your product as thoroughly as you can. By doing so, you avoid the risk of laying too much stress upon any specific appeal which may prove weak or ineffectual. And, by exposing many of your product's uses and advantages you, at least, enable your reader to know what they are --- so that he can judge for himself the ones which appeal most to him.

**96. \$80,000 IN PRIZES! HELP US FIND THE NAME FOR THESE NEW KITCHENS**

No review of good headlines could be considered even fairly representative unless it included an example of one featuring a prize contest. Of course, it first boldly displays how much money can be won; secondly, what you have to do to win some of it.

**97. NOW! OWN FLORIDA LAND THIS EASY WAY...\$10 DOWN AND \$10 A MONTH**

This one also represents a commonly used headline offer --- easy terms --- and conveys it forcefully and persuasively.

**98. TAKE ANY 3 OF THESE KITCHEN APPLIANCES --- FOR ONLY \$8.95 (VALUES UP TO \$15.45)**

The familiar reduced-price offer which we see in so many different and alluring forms.

**99. SAVE 20 CENTS ON TWO CANS OF CRANBERRY SAUCE --- LIMITED OFFER**

An example of the ever-popular coupon-redemption offer. "Limited offer" to increase response. (Sometimes an actual expiration date is stated, to spur quicker action.)

**100. ONE PLACE SETTING FREE FOR EVERY THREE YOU BUY!**

So now we've finished running the hundred --- except for this last type of headline: the ubiquitous free offer. The rules specify (as exemplified here) that when something must also be bought, this requirement must be displayed with sufficient prominence. "Free" is, of course, a hackneyed and moss-covered word, but there doesn't seem to be any equally strong, or less blatant, substitute for it.

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