



MAHA COPY SHOP

THE ULTIMATE HEADLINE HELPER

*A step-by-step guide to writing
headlines that get clicked*



Aloha

Thanks for being here, friend.

Welcome to The Ultimate Headline Helper — a guide to writing website and blog headlines that people actually want to click.

As a resource, this guide gives you:

1. A step-by-step process for writing high-converting headlines
2. Some of our favorite examples of headlines that work
3. A headline breakdown doc you can use on repeat

We're Haley and Madison Enos, strategic copywriters here to help you master the "how" behind writing words that work. We specialize in working with coaches and creatives, but the steps, tips, and processes in this guide will work no matter who or what you're writing for.

Ready to stop feeling stressed and start feeling *super confident* in your headlines? Let's dive in!

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TERMS & CONDITIONS

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Enjoy!



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PART 1

A LITTLE INTRO

BEFORE WE BEGIN

If you want to write excellent, high-converting copy, here's lesson #1: *don't start from scratch.*

Think of copywriting as painting a masterpiece with words. If you've only ever studied art and never held a paintbrush, you're not likely going to paint the next Mona Lisa. And the same goes for if you've only ever held paintbrushes and never studied the craft.

Copywriting, like any art, takes more than just one step:

1. Learn the craft
2. Do your research
3. Write, rinse, repeat

This guide will teach you the craft — the techniques used by the best copywriters and marketers out there to *make words sell*. But that's still only step one.

If you want to get the most out of this guide, you're going to need to follow through on steps 2 and 3, too. You're going to need to do a ton of research — even if, like us, just the word *research* makes your eyes glaze over a little — and you're going to need to write. You're going to need to write *a lot*.

And when you write, there will be moments when you feel like the *worst writer ever*. There will be days when writer's block gets the best of you and it takes you hours to put down one, semi-passable sentence. There will be times when you doubt yourself, or you're just not having a productive day, or you sit down in front of your laptop and think, “...*Where do I start again?*”

So in those moments, friend, you're invited to come back to this guide.

Come back to the craft.

Take the techniques we're about to outline, look at the examples we give, and then go and *do it even better*.

Remember, the best copywriters *copy*. You're never starting from scratch.



PART 1

WEBSITE HEADLINES

FIRST THING'S FIRST.

Why are all copywriters OBSESSED with headlines?

If it seems like copywriters are always talking about headlines, it's probably because we are—but for good reason. It doesn't take much marketing experience to see the value of a clickable headline. The father of advertising, David Ogilvy, once said: "On average, 5 times as many people read the headlines as the body copy."

AKA: Your headlines will be the most-read content on your site. That's pretty high stakes for a handful of words.

But I probably don't have to tell you that. If you're here, you already know that improving your headline strategy can help you lower your website's bounce rate, improve your open & click-through rates, get higher conversions, and, ultimately, make more money.

This guide wasn't created to give you quick answers and endless fill-in-the-blanks. It was created to **teach you the process behind writing headlines that work, so you can write them with confidence for years to come.**

Before you get started, know that this guide assumes you've already done the work of defining your audience, brand voice, unique selling proposition, offerings, and long-term goals. It will be so much easier to take this advice and run with it if you have your brand down pat.

And our final ask? Be gentle with yourself. This resource is packed with tips, tricks, and best practices, and it's impossible to master them all overnight. Start slow, keep at it, and practice! If you have any questions, we're always available by email at info@mahacopy.com.

A FEW NOTES BEFORE WE GET STARTED:

- Your audience is your best teacher. Some marketing strategies will look great on paper but fall flat in practice. Every audience is different, so take what works and leave the rest!
- If you feel strongly about trying a strategy that "breaks the rules," don't let this guide hold you back! Test it, measure it, and let us know how it goes. :)
- Many copywriting practices outlined in this guide have been around for 50+ years, so you can expect them to last. That being said, we're fans of the phrase: "We reserve the right to get smarter." We'll always make changes and updates as we see fit.

THE 10 RULES FOR HAPPY HEADLINES

(THE GIST? KEEP IT SHORT, SIMPLE, AND SPECIFIC!)

- 01 **Prioritize clarity.** Don't try to be cute, smart, punny, or persuasive. And *definitely* don't force clever. I'd venture to say "clever" headlines are only actually clever ~1% of the time.
- 02 **Keep it short & sweet.** The ideal headline length is between 7 and 14 words. The exact length will differ depending on the platform, the content, and your audience.
- 03 **Speak to your people.** There's a reason why Fortune 500 companies have bad conversion rates: they're trying to speak to everyone. Pick your people and they'll pick you back!
- 04 **Be specific.** Which would you rather read: "How to Lose Weight" or "20 Plank Exercises for Your Strongest Core Ever"? The more specific you can be, the better!
- 05 **Go deep on benefits.** Speaking to the deep benefit will keep your audience reading. What's in it for them? Tell them why they should stick around.
- 06 **Instill emotion.** They say around 85% of purchasing decisions are driven by emotion. So think about the emotional response you want your audience to have, and write for it!
- 07 **Use words that work.** Some words are commonly used in copy because they're effective! Use action verbs and power words to inspire action in your audience.
- 08 **Don't over-promise.** It's okay to use phrases like "The X Best" and "The Ultimate," but if you mislead your audience with a promise you can't keep, you'll lose their trust.
- 09 **Release attachment.** It's easy to get attached to the first idea you like, but your best idea will probably come with more time and thought. Let go of some good ideas to get to the great ones.
- 10 **When in doubt, test it out.** Your audience is unique. The only way to find out what works best for them is to test out multiple options. When it comes to headlines, A/B testing is your best friend!

WRITING YOUR HEADLINE: THE PROCESS

Always lead with the benefit

You've probably heard of features and benefits, but have you heard of deep benefits? Before you put pen to paper, you need to get super clear on your features, benefits, and deep benefits. We're talking 20/20 vision, folks. Let's take it step by step.

FEATURES ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE.

In short, features are what you offer. They can be tangible (something you've created), or intangible (something you do / are). When you're creating a list of features, you could include the different products or services you offer, tools, content or special access you provide (emails, podcasts, downloadables, quizzes, community groups...), guarantees, industry standards you meet, certifications, etc. The list of possibilities is endless.

Take, for example, a health coaching program. A list of features could look like:

*A personalized fitness plan
Nutritional guidance sessions on Zoom
Bi-weekly newsletter*

*Facebook community access
100% satisfaction guarantee
Board-certified coach*

BENEFITS ARE THE ADVANTAGES YOUR CUSTOMER GETS FROM YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE.

Basically, that means benefits are *how your customer's life gets better*. Something like:

*Lose excess weight
Feel more confident in your body
Heal from chronic pain*

*Ease stress and anxiety
Form a healthy relationship with food
Gain energy*

Did you notice the main difference between these two yet?

Your features are all about you. They're what you think about — what you've worked endless hours to achieve, or create. What you spend all day, everyday doing in your business.

But your customer? Your customer has their own set of problems, and needs, and desires, and they just don't care about the unique formula you developed to create your personalized fitness plan. That's not what they're thinking about. That's not why they need what you're offering.

They're thinking about the benefits — or rather, they're dreaming (consciously or subconsciously) of the benefits. Most likely, they're only actively thinking about their own problems.

They're thinking about how they feel uncomfortable in their body, or how their low self-esteem is affecting their relationship, or how they are sick of prioritizing everyone else over themselves, or how they are tired of being in chronic pain day after day.

Before you write, you need to understand these problems in depth. You need to get into the mind of your customer and understand their unique needs and desires, so you can say the words they need to hear. The words they need to hear, of course, are the benefits.

When you're writing to your customer, always lead with the benefits.



Ready?

JOURNAL TIME

OUTLINE YOUR FEATURES AND BENEFITS

Remember 2 pages back when we said “...you need to get super clear on your features, benefits, and deep benefits”? Yeah, we meant it.

Before you can find your deep benefit and write that OMG-worthy headline, you need to know all of your features and benefits like the back of your hand (although, does anyone really know the back of their hand? Try to know them like your couch. That seems more accurate to us. Get comfy with them.)

Try to match benefits to each feature. Some benefits may fall under multiple features, and that’s okay. Some may not apply to any — that’s okay too. The more benefits you can find, the better. Write them all down.

Don’t rush this step, friend. Take your time. The effort you put in now to unearth all of your features and benefits will make it easy to write strategic, purposeful copy later. Trust us.

FEATURES

BENEFITS

PRODUCTS

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

SERVICES

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<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

CONTENT

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TOOLS

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ACCESS

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GUARANTEES

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CERTIFICATES

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OTHER

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DEEP BENEFITS

Your headline is your deep benefit

So, now that we've covered the basics of features and benefits, let's talk about finding your *deep benefit*. This is The Ultimate Headline Helper after all, and your headline should follow what Ann Handley calls the "golden rule of headlines": *focus on the deep benefit*.

But what does that mean?

Regular benefits are any advantage your customer gets with your offer, but deep benefits are, well, *deeper*. Deep benefits should feel powerful and life-changing. They should feel like a big hug, a sigh of relief, or a sign from the universe. They make your customer think *this is exactly what I've been looking for*.

Generally, deep benefits are focused on:

1. An emotional response, or
2. Transformation.

Let's see what this looks like in practice.

If we look at our health coaching feature *personalized fitness plan*, one of the benefits is to *lose excess weight*. Is that a deep benefit?

You might think, "Yes, because weight loss is a kind of transformation", but think *deeper*. If you've ever known someone who lost weight, you know that the weight loss itself — the physical transformation — isn't what people talk about. They talk about the way their life and their relationships changed. They talk about how their thoughts and beliefs about themselves transformed. When people tell them, "You look great!" they usually don't mean *your body looks smaller*, they mean *wow, you look happier than I've seen you look in a long time. You look like a different person*.

That is the kind of transformation we are trying to put into words. That is the kind of transformation that is a *deep benefit*.

Finding your deep benefit

You're probably thinking, Okay, I'm with you. I see the difference, I get it. But how am I supposed to find *my* deep benefits?

We always come back to these 3 techniques. To be totally real with you, we love techniques 1 & 2 so much that we rarely use #3. But we figured we'd give it to you anyway, just in case it turns out to be your fav. Because we're thoughtful like that.

Madison's Pick

01. PROBLEM / SOLUTION

This technique for finding your deep benefits is just as simple as the title. Start by writing down all of the main problems your customer faces — the biggest struggles and obstacles you can think of. The realer, the better. Your deep benefit will be the direct solution to one of these problems — and may also work as a general solution to the majority of the problems.

For example, a person who needs a health coach:

- may feel uncomfortable in their skin or have low self-esteem
- has probably been through cycles of dieting
- may feel like they've tried everything to "figure out" health, but just couldn't do it alone
- likely feels out of control

So the deep benefit could be something like:

"I help you take control of your health, once and for all."

Halley's Pick

02. ASK WHY

We love this technique because it's fast, simple, and makes it super easy to spot the difference between benefits that are just regular advantages, and benefits that are deep, emotional transformations. The key word here is emotion.

HOW IT WORKS

- Start with one of your main features — and keep asking why.
- Start every sentence with either “I want” or “I feel”
- When you encounter an emotion, either:
 1. STOP — Explore that emotion. Is it an emotion you can connect to a deep benefit?
 2. Ask “why” to the emotion — why do you *feel* this way? Sometimes the answer can lead you to a transformative deep benefit.

Let's walk through it together using the feature *nutritional guidance sessions*.

I want nutritional guidance sessions on Zoom
Why do you want nutritional guidance sessions on Zoom?

Because I want to lose excess weight
Why do you want to lose excess weight?

Because I want to feel comfortable in my skin

STOP!

Did you see the emotion?
It's tucked away in an adjective, but if you look closely, you can spot it. *Discomfort*.

Anytime you write “feel” or an emotion, stop and see what's going on. Is it a real emotion? Can you use it to build a deep benefit?

Here, for example, our deep benefit could be:
“I help you feel comfortable in your skin, once and for all.”

But since “comfortable” is an adjective and not a direct emotion, let's see if we can go any deeper here.

Remember, when you come to an emotion, if you want to explore deeper, ask “why” to *the emotion*.

Why do you feel uncomfortable in your skin?
Because I feel like I've lost control of myself

Aha.

Here we corroborate the other deep benefit we found: "Take control of your health, once and for all."

You can do this practice many times, choosing multiple features or using the same feature multiple times. For example, *nutritional guidance sessions* could take a completely different path.

I want nutritional guidance sessions on Zoom
Why?
Because I want someone to teach me about nutrition
Why?
Because I want to stop cycles of dieting
Why?
Because I want to heal my relationship with food
Why?
Because I feel out of control

Try a few different routes, and see where you land. You may find yourself coming back to the same benefit again and again — that's okay, but try to think from multiple perspectives and find more than one. We'll talk about how to choose your deep benefit in the next section.

03. PICTURE THE COMMERCIAL

Okay, this one's a little wacky. But if you're really struggling to find your deep benefit with techniques 1 and 2 — especially if you're struggling to find real problems — sometimes it helps to hyperbolize and visualize the situation. With this technique, you're going to picture an over-the-top commercial you would make for your feature. Focus mostly on these questions: who is the protagonist, who is the antagonist, and what is resolution, and what is the protagonist's reaction to the resolution? The reaction is often the emotional transformation you're looking for.



65 BASIC EMOTIONS: A HELPFUL GUIDE FOR COPYWRITERS

FIND THEIR FEELINGS, FIND YOUR DEEP BENEFITS

I feel angry
I feel mad
I feel frustrated
I feel annoyed
I feel insulted
I feel cheated
I feel vengeful
I feel irritated
I feel bitter
I feel infuriated
I feel peeved
I feel insulted
I feel contempt
I feel indignant
I feel envious
I feel afraid
I feel stressed
I feel worried
I feel anxious
I feel nervous
I feel doubtful
I feel confused

I feel panicked
I feel scared
I feel desperate
I feel horrified
I feel overwhelmed
I feel sad
I feel unhappy
I feel lonely
I feel rejected
I feel hopeless
I feel lost
I feel troubled
I feel apprehensive
I feel disappointed
I feel gloomy
I feel heartbroken
I feel troubled
I feel miserable
I feel bored
I feel disgusted
I feel offended
I feel disapproving

I feel uncomfortable
I feel nauseated
I feel withdrawn
I feel disturbed
I feel horrified
I feel repulsed
I feel ashamed
I feel happy
I feel loved
I feel relieved
I feel content
I feel amused
I feel joyful
I feel proud
I feel excited
I feel peaceful
I feel satisfied
I feel calm
I feel connected
I feel safe
I feel empowered



Your turn!

JOURNAL TIME

Pick one (or all!) of these 3 techniques to find your deep benefits, and try it out yourself.

Problem / Solution

PROBLEM _____

SOLUTION _____

DEEP BENEFIT _____

PROBLEM _____

SOLUTION _____

DEEP BENEFIT _____

PROBLEM _____

SOLUTION _____

DEEP BENEFIT _____

PROBLEM	_____
SOLUTION	_____
	DEEP BENEFIT _____
PROBLEM	_____
SOLUTION	_____
	DEEP BENEFIT _____
PROBLEM	_____
SOLUTION	_____
	DEEP BENEFIT _____

Ask Why

I WANT

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

DEEP BENEFIT

I WANT

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

DEEP BENEFIT

I WANT

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

I WANT

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

Why?

BECAUSE

DEEP BENEFIT

DEEP BENEFIT

Picture the Commercial

DESCRIBE THE PROTAGONIST & ANTAGONIST

IMAGINE THE COMMERCIAL

DESCRIBE THE RESOLUTION & REACTION

DEEP BENEFIT

Choosing your deep benefit

So now you know the difference between features, benefits, and deep benefits, and it's time to do the work of choosing your deep benefit and writing your headline. To choose your deep benefit, you'll need to dig deep into your positioning and message to figure out what you — specifically *you* — want to say.

Step 1: Do your research

Think "market research" sounds intimidating? Join the club. But don't worry, we're going to make it really simple for you. Basically, all you're trying to do is answer 3 basic questions: what's out there, what do customers want, and where do I fit in?

QUESTION 1: WHAT'S OUT THERE?

Start with a general Google search. Type your business keywords into Google and see what comes up. Pay special attention to Google ads. Since companies pay for these ads, they are generally filled with strategic copy that has been A/B tested and refined by professional copywriters. Don't focus on the headline just yet — instead, browse the microcopy. What benefits do they focus on? What features do they list? What keywords and phrases are they using? What are their main calls to action?

In particular, pay attention to professionals doing your job. If you're a private health coach, for instance, you want to look at other private health coaches rather than an app that acts as a virtual health coach.

Pay even more attention to professionals doing your job in your location or in similar locations. Focus on areas with similar population sizes, income ranges, political demographics, and general lifestyles.

Browse their websites. What headlines are they using? What are their USPs? What are the common benefits they list? What stands out to you? What do you like? What do you dislike? What seems to be working?

Overarching question: What do the people who are successful have in common?

TIPS

- Take screenshots. Create a “Research” folder and save all of your screenshots there. When you want to compare what other companies and professionals are doing, pull your photos up side by side — this is especially helpful if you’re a visual learner like us!
- Don’t see any ads? Make sure you’re not in Incognito mode.
- Want to easily change your location? Get a location changer like the Chrome extension “gs location changer” to change your location for a Google search. Then, you’ll get ads targeted for that area.

QUESTION 2: WHAT DO CUSTOMERS WANT?

At this point, we’ve talked in detail about how important it is to deeply understand your customer. You’ve thought about your customer’s problems and desires. But do you expect to understand the full picture of your customer’s emotions — and what they struggle with *the most* — simply through the power of imagination?

Even if you have the intuitive powers of Gandalf, you’re never going to know what your customers really need by simply imagining what it’s like to be them. You need to do some research.

It may sound crazy, but the absolute best way to understand your audience and what they want is to *ask them*. (Don’t have an audience to ask? Go for the second best way: stalk them.)

1. FACEBOOK IS WHERE IT’S AT

*If you don’t have an audience to reach out to, this option is for you. (If you do have an audience, this option is for you, too!)

What are we looking for? Problems! Where do people love to share their problems? Facebook groups! Join Facebook groups of your ideal audience, and start paying attention.

What questions are people asking? What problems and concerns do they have? What messages spark the longest conversations?

...Do we have to remind you to take notes and screenshots?

2. GET SOCIAL ON SOCIAL

If you already have an audience or past customers to reach out to, you’re one step ahead of the game. Leverage that. Do your best to understand what they were looking for when they first came to you, and why they chose to purchase from you or follow you.

—> **POLL YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE**

- What matters most to them when it comes to hiring someone for your service / choosing your product?
- How did they feel before & after using your product or service?
- If they haven't purchased your product/service yet, why not?

—> **REACH OUT WITH A REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE WITH TARGETED QUESTIONS**

- Why did they choose your service or product over others in your market?
- What do they think your biggest strength is?
- What makes your product or service stand out?

Overarching question: What do my customers really need that I can offer?

QUESTION 3: WHERE DO I FIT IN?

Try to pinpoint what sets you apart from the rest. What's your superpower? What do you do spectacularly that everyone else does at a passing grade? What do people compliment you on again and again?

If you're struggling to find something that uniquely sets you apart, see if there's a hole you can fill. What customer problem is everyone else overlooking? What truth still needs to be told? What is everyone else doing similarly — and how could you do it differently?

Overarching question: What is everyone else missing?

Step 2: Map out your customers' problems

Now that you have a basic understanding of your market and your audience, it's time to step into your customer's shoes. This is the moment to put on your empathetic hat. We'll give you a second to go grab it...

...Ready? Let's do this.

Make a list of every potential problem your customers are facing. **If you tried the Problem/Solution journal before, you may already have a starting point!*

—> **DIVE INTO RESEARCH**

What have you read, heard, seen, or felt them struggle with? If you've heard directly from customers, use their language. Literally, copy and paste exactly what they said. Sometimes, a customer's words are the exact inspiration you need later.

→ USE YOUR IMAGINATION

Picture their day. When they wake up in the morning, how do they feel? What do they expect to be the hardest part of their day — physically or emotionally? When they're going through their day, what obstacles do they face? What negative thoughts do they have?

For example, our health coach might write this about their customer:

- Wakes up feeling uncomfortable in their skin
- Has been through many cycles of dieting, and felt disappointed after each cycle
- Negative thoughts sound like “I’m so lazy and undisciplined” or “I always fail”
- Feels like they’ve tried everything to “figure out” health, but just couldn’t do it alone
- Likely feels out of control

Your turn.

MY CUSTOMER...

Step 3: Choose the most valuable benefit

Now return to your list of features and benefits on page X. Choose your main 3-5 features and start matching your pain points to them. Then, match a benefit to the feature/pain point combo as well. Try to match your deep benefits here, but if you feel a regular benefit is a better match, that's okay. You may find multiple pain points and benefits relate to one feature — that's okay too. Write them all down like this

FEATURE

Nutritional guidance sessions

PAIN POINT

Has been through many cycles of dieting & disappointment

BENEFIT

Form a healthy relationship with food

FEATURE

Nutritional guidance sessions

PAIN POINT

Feels out of control

BENEFIT

Gain back control of your health

When you're finished, go through your list and rate how valuable each feature/benefit combo is to your customers. Your deep benefit — the benefit you will use to craft your headline — will be the benefit that relates to the highest value.

When you're rating, think about:

- Which features are the most important to your customers? What do they consistently say they need?
- Which pain points are the most painful for your customers? What do they say they struggle with the most?

*If your highest-value benefit is not a deep benefit, go back to Page X and use the “Ask why” prompt to find the deep benefit behind your high-value benefit.

Your turn!

JOURNAL TIME

CHOOSE YOUR DEEP BENEFIT

FEATURE

PAIN POINT

BENEFIT

VALUE

1 2 3 4 5

FEATURE

PAIN POINT

BENEFIT

VALUE

1 2 3 4 5

FEATURE

PAIN POINT

BENEFIT

VALUE

1 2 3 4 5

FEATURE

PAIN POINT

BENEFIT

VALUE

1 2 3 4 5

FEATURE

PAIN POINT

BENEFIT

VALUE

1 2 3 4 5

FEATURE

PAIN POINT

BENEFIT

VALUE

1 2 3 4 5

MY DEEP BENEFIT IS:



DEEP BENEFIT MUST-HAVES

01. TRUE

Don't make promises you can't keep. Don't over-hype what you're selling. Tap into what is true.

02. SPECIFIC

When choosing a deep benefit — focus on one. It'll be more memorable and meaningful.

03. RELATABLE

Deep benefits can *feel* unique to you, but they shouldn't be 100% unique. You want others to empathize.

04. POSITIVE

Be forward-thinking and optimistic. *I help you take control*, not *I help you stop losing control*.

05. EMOTIVE

You want to make your audience feel something. Read your deep benefit aloud. Read it to your partner or roommate or a stranger. Ask what it makes them feel. If the answer is nothing, go deeper.

Writing your hero headline

Now that you've got your deep benefit, let's talk about how to turn it into a headline. The first headline your website visitors see — your *hero headline* — is the most important one you'll write. This is where you get the initial buy-in — where you tell readers *here's what's in it for you if you stick around*.

This is where your deep benefit belongs.

But...how exactly do you write it?

Step 1: Choose your emotional trigger

We've talked in depth about finding a deep benefit that is emotive — that connects deeply to an emotion your customer is feeling.

But to write strategically, you need to do more than just tap into how your customer is feeling. You also need to encourage them to feel *how you want them to feel*.

Marketers use a wide array of emotional triggers to get audiences to feel a certain way that ultimately makes them want what you're offering. Here are just a few of the most commonly used triggers.

POSITIVE

Empowerment
Empathy
Sentimentality
Ambition
Trust
Belonging
Joy

NEGATIVE

Fear
Surprise
Uncertainty
Lust
Envy
Anger

A NOTE ON "NEGATIVE" EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS:

Try not to have positive and negative connotations about the words "positive" and "negative." Many brands trying to have a positive impact use negative emotions to trigger a response. It's all about figuring out which emotional trigger is right for your product or service, and your audience.

Let's look at an example.

Have you seen the Apple Watch commercial that depicts the Apple Watch automatically calling 911 after the owner suffers a biking accident?

What emotional trigger do you think they're using?

If you think *fear*, you're close — but not quite there.

Fear is an emotion they've identified in their audience. Fear is the emotion they used to derive their deep benefit, but it is not the emotional trigger of the commercial.

The commercial doesn't actually show anyone getting into an accident — it doesn't make you feel afraid. In fact, the commercial shows peaceful, serene landscapes. You only hear the voice of the Apple Watch calling 911, and emergency services saying they are on their way. The emotional trigger they're using is *trust*. What they're doing is tapping into the fear their audience likely had before — *what if something like that happened to me?* — and making their product the solution you can trust that relieves the fear. (Brilliant, right?)

When you're choosing how to write your deep benefit in your headline, ask yourself these question:

- What emotional trigger is going to be most effective for my audience?
- What emotional trigger is going to be most true to my brand?

For our health coach using the deep benefit “take control of your health,” the headline could look very different depending on which emotional trigger they want to convey.

—> An *empowering* headline, for example, might be actionable and direct:

Take control of your health, once and for all

—> A *joyful* headline might sound like:

Taking control of your health never felt this good

—> A headline triggering *envy* might evoke thoughts of comparison, like:

Now you can take control of your health, too

—> *Uncertainty* could speak to the common doubts you hear, like:

It's never too late to take control of your health

—> A headline triggering *trust* might look like:

I help you take control of your health

—> *Empathy* could look like:

You deserve to take control of your health

The better you know your audience and your branding, the easier it will be to know which type of emotional trigger you want to use. But as any great copywriter knows, there's no better strategy than testing. So if you want to see how your audience reacts to different emotional triggers, test them out! You may be surprised by the results.

Step 2: Write your headline

You didn't think we'd leave you without some formulas to use when you're trying to write your headline, did you?

Here's the thing though: formulas are just a starting point. They're a brainstorming tool, but they're not always going to help you churn out the ultimate headline in seconds.

Use these formulas to get your brain flowing. Use them for inspiration, or when you're feeling stuck. They might lead you to the best headline ever, or they may just point you in a general direction. Our point is, don't think of them as *the only right way* to write good headlines. Agreed? Awesome. Let's write.

20 WEBSITE HEADLINE FORMULAS WE LOVE

- 01 I help (intended audience) (get this benefit) (with/by) (specific offers)
I help multi-passionate women scale to 7-figures with The 10X Mastermind.
- 02 It's about time you (got this benefit) without (undesirable component)
It's about time you sold out without selling out.
- 03 (Main goal) with (simple solution) (that/to/and) (benefit)
Become a premium designer with Showit and never have to code again.
- 04 (Get this benefit) (by taking this seemingly unrelated action)
Make more money by working in your sweatpants.
- 05 (Get this benefit) without (this undesirable thing)
Do the important work without the busy work.
- 06 What if you could (get this benefit) without (undesirable component)
What if you could travel the world without leaving your couch?
- 07 You don't have to be (this kind of pro) to (get this benefit) (and maybe this benefit too)
You don't have to be a model to feel confident in front of the camera.
- 08 (Get this benefit). (In this very short amount of time).
Improve your credit score in just 7 short days.
- 09 Now you can (get this benefit) (without/despite) (the norm)
Now your kids can cook like chefs, without the mess.
- 10 Ready to (get this benefit), but (obstacle action verb) (main obstacle/objection)? You need (this product/service).
Ready to scale your business, but unsure where to begin? You need The Business Coaching Mastermind.

- 11 Your (superlative) (product or service), (benefit)
Your go-to haircare for split-proof ends.
- 12 The only (product/service) (that defies main objection)
The only makeup you can sleep in worry-free.
- 13 You deserve (this benefit) without (this consequence)
You deserve a dream vacation without the stress of planning.
- 14 Say goodbye to (undesirable thing said in a casual way)
Say goodbye to feeling overwhelmed by your to-do list.
- 15 (Product/Service) that's so (superlative) it's (surprising superlative)
Skincare that's so natural, it's edible.
- 16 The (superlative) (product/service) for (intended audience)
The best product shop templates for designers and creators.
- 17 I help (X) (do Y) (by/with) (doing Z).
I help yoga teachers build an audience with personalized fitness apps.
- 18 Ready to (break down the transformation)?
Ready to blow up your email list with high-ticket leads?
- 19 Now you can (get this benefit) even if you (experience this undesirable circumstance)
Now you can publish your book, even if no one wants to read it.
- 20 Most (product/service) (do this). Ours (do this better thing).
Most jeans fit your curves. Ours flaunt them.

Your turn!

JOURNAL TIME

WRITE YOUR HEADLINE USING EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS

MY DEEP BENEFIT IS:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

EMOTIONAL
TRIGGER:

HEADLINE:

Your turn!

JOURNAL TIME

WRITE YOUR HEADLINE USING FORMULAS

MY DEEP BENEFIT IS:

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

08

09

10

11

12

13

14

15

Choosing your hero headline

Now that you have a lot of options (you've filled up that list above, right?) it's time to clear out the junk. It's okay if you feel like that's 90% of what you wrote. That just makes this step easier!

First, let's get rid of the real duds.

- Is your headline trying too hard to be clever or creative? Trash it.
- Is it impossible to tell what your product or service is? Trash.
- Is it so short that it has become vague? Trash.
- Is it too long and wordy? Trash.
- Does it sound totally unnatural? Trash.
- Does it focus on you rather than your customer? Trash, trash, trash.

Just to be clear, by "trash it" we do NOT mean delete it. We mean move it to a special section called "Notes" or "Inspo" or "Things I wrote that I hate but those copy twins told me not to get rid of." Seriously, everything you write could serve as inspiration later. Keep it all.

Now you should have a handful of solid headline options. Maybe less. If you have more, you might have been too nice to your options. This is not a time to be nice, friend! This is a time to be picky! Go back through that list again. When you've whittled it down to 5, come back to us.

Test each headline out in your design. Words in a Google doc look vastly different than words in big, bold letters on a website. Your best option might stand out immediately, but if you're still between two or three options, use the Happy Headline Checklist — the headline that gets the most "YES!" answers is your winner!

HAPPY HEADLINE CHECKLIST

Do I touch on a deep benefit?	YES / NO
Is it clear what my product or service is?	YES / NO
Am I using an emotional trigger that fits my brand or audience?	YES / NO
Is my headline between 7 and 14 words?	YES / NO
Is it clear who my audience is?	YES / NO
Am I super specific?	YES / NO
Is my headline actionable?	YES / NO
Do I use "you" rather than "we/our"?	YES / NO
Is my headline emotive?	YES / NO
Does my headline complement the design?	YES / NO

Additional website headlines

For all other headlines on your website, you can use the same techniques we just walked you through for your hero headline. You might have even brainstormed some headline solutions that could work for other pages! Just make sure to focus on a benefit that connects to the content of the page your headline is on.

You can be a little more flexible with headlines on other pages of your website — for example, secondary headlines don't need to be as clear and straightforward about what your product or service is. Anything that grabs and holds attention works. When in doubt, test it out!

A word on SEO

You may have noticed we went through this entire guide without mentioning SEO. No, we didn't forget about SEO. But we don't want you to pay too much attention to it when you're first writing your website headline, and here's why.

If you follow this guide, your headline should be very clear and specific about what you offer, and you may have some keywords in your headline just by following the steps we've outlined. That's awesome.

But if you don't have a keyword-rich headline right away, don't think of it as the end of the world.

The truth is, it is hard to rank on page 1 of Google. If your #1 goal is to rank on page 1, then by all means, focus HARD on SEO. But if your audience is not coming from Google — if the majority of your audience is coming from Instagram, Pinterest, or elsewhere — the user experience of your website is going to be MUCH more important for conversions than ranking for keywords. A strong website that highlights benefits and speaks right to your audience will have a higher conversion rate even if you have less overall eyes on your site.

So when it comes to SEO, we suggest adding in keywords to your headline *after* you have a strong idea of the benefit and what you want to say. Also, test it. Test one version of your headline without thinking about keywords, and test another version with added keywords. See what works best for you and your audience.



PART 3

BLOG HEADLINES

SO...WHAT ABOUT BLOGS?

Does the process for writing website headlines work for blog headlines too? Hate to break it to you, friend, but writing blog headlines is an entirely different beast. Seriously, when it comes to writing blog headlines, forget everything we just told you.

Blog headlines grab attention, period.

When you're writing blog headlines, throw benefits and deep benefits out the window. Your main focus, instead, is to open a loop with your audience by *grabbing their attention*. Here are a few ways you can get all eyes on you.

1. BE SUPER SPECIFIC

Which would you rather read: "How to Lose Weight" or "20 Plank Exercises for Your Strongest Core Ever"? When you're specific about your topic, it gives you the added advantage of being able to give specific answers. There are thousands of ways to lose weight — you'll never conquer them all in one article. But 20 plank exercises you can deliver, and you can deliver them exceptionally. Your reader will be more attracted to the specific headline, and more satisfied with the content.

IS MY HEADLINE SPECIFIC ENOUGH?

- Do you know the who, what, when, where, and/or how?
- Can you add more context to the who, what, when, were, or how?
- Does your content answer your headline fully?

2. PROVIDE VALUE

Write content that answers questions your readers actually have, and frame your headline as the answer. You can use SEO tools to find commonly asked questions about a topic. Don't have SEO tools? We suggest starting with Ubersuggest. You get 3 free searches a day, so you can look up questions related to 3 keyword searches. Remember to include keywords towards the beginning of your headline for SEO!

3. BE SENSATIONAL

Unlike website headlines, which should always be true, blog headlines can be a little exaggerated. Sensationalize your headline with superlatives like “the ultimate,” e.g. The Ultimate Guide to Bathing Suit Shopping in Ibiza in 2022. Of course, it’s best practice to deliver on your headline with awesome content, but you’re not going to have to testify that your article is really “the ultimate.”

4. USE POWER WORDS

Here’s another would-you-rather: “40 Ridiculously Epic Hiking Trails to Try in 2022” or “40 Great Hiking Trails to Try in 2022”? Swap out common adjectives for better ones. Or, in power words, swap out yawn-worthy adjectives for jaw-dropping ones. Increase your click-worthiness instantly. Another favorite power word switch? “You should” instead of “You could.” “You Should Be Making as Much Money as Kim Kardashian.” Intriguing, right?

5. START WITH A NUMBER

This one is super simple, but it works. Numbers catch your eye because they’re not letters. Period. The most clickable numbers, in order, are: 10, 5, 15, 7, 20, 6. Switch it up, though. You don’t want someone to go to your blog and notice that every article starts with the number 10. Variation matters.

22 FORMULAS FOR THE ULTIMATE BLOG HEADLINE

- 01 The Ultimate Guide to (This Thing I Want to Talk About)
- 02 X (Tips/Solutions) You Need to (Do This Thing You Desire)
- 03 X Reasons Why You Should (Do This Desirable Thing)
- 04 X Steps to (Do This Thing) in (This Amount of Time)
- 05 X Lessons I Learned from (Experience)
- 06 (This Thing) Will Make You (Feel This Way / Want This Thing)
- 07 X Things I Wish I Knew as (This Thing You Are / Used To Be)
- 08 Now You Can (Do This Desirable Thing) (With This Great Circumstance)
- 09 The (Superlative) Way to (Get Desired Outcome / Result)
- 10 X Secrets to (Get This Incredible Outcome)
- 11 How to (Do This Difficult Thing) Without (This Undesirable Aspect)
- 12 Little-Known Ways to (Get This Desirable Outcome)
- 13 Behind the Scenes of a Successful (Project/Experience)
- 14 X Common Mistakes New (Audience) Make
- 15 What I Never Knew About (This Thing I Want to Talk About)
- 16 How (Doing This Thing) Made Me (Change in This Surprising / Dramatic Way)
- 17 You Should (Do This Desirable Thing) like (This Noteworthy Person)
- 18 Here's Why I Stopped (Doing This Thing Towards This Goal)
- 20 I Quit (Unexpected or Undesirable Thing). Here's Why.
- 21 X Things I'd Do Differently as a New (Job Title / Audience).
- 22 Everybody Should Know About (This Thing I Want to Talk About)

99 EPIC POWER WORDS FOR CLICK-WORTHY HEADLINES

Absurd	Genuine	Perfect
Adorable	Groundbreaking	Popular
Affordable	Guaranteed	Practical
Alarming	Hack	Priceless
Amazing	Heartwarming	Problem
Astounding	Hilarious	Proven
Authentic	Honest	Sale
Awesome	Horrifying	Secret
Awkward	Immediately	Seriously
Badass	Increase	Shocking
Bold	Incredible	Sneak-Peek
Brilliant	Insane	Solution
Charming	Inspiring	Special
Cheat	Instantly	Spoiler
Complete	Irresistible	Step-by-Step
Comprehensive	Jaw-Dropping	Stop
Confession	Laugh	Stunning
Crave	Launch	Success
Cringeworthy	Literally	Suddenly
Delightful	Little-Known	Surprising
Devastating	Luxurious	Today
Disgusting	Magic	Trendy
Effortless	Magnificent	Truth
Elite	Master	Unbelievable
Embarrassing	Minimalist	Unconventional
Epic	Mistake	Unexpected
Essential	Money	Unique
Ethical	Never	Unlimited
Exposed	New	Unseen
Fail-Proof	Now	Ultimate
Free	Obsessed	Weird
Funniest	Official	Wild
Genius	Overnight	Worst

A FINAL WORD (OR FOUR)...

You made it, friend!

This is it! You now have all of the tools you need to stop feeling stressed about writing headlines, and start feeling *oh-so-confident*. Is there anything better than the feeling of writing with purpose?

We can only think of one: seeing the awesome results.

So go on! Write your OMG-worthy website and blog headlines. And when you feel that wonderful tingle of confidence while you're writing, or when your words make your product or service (or your client's product or service) sell-out, give us a shout! We'll be waiting with the champagne and high fives. Can't freaking wait.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Madison & Haley". The script is fluid and cursive, with the names connected by an ampersand.

AKA, MAHA COPY CO.

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