

Headline Writing

District Meet • 2025



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

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

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

For the first time, the Leopard Labcoats science team won the district's Science Olympics Monday. They will advance to the regional Science Olympics at Bend High School April 4.

"That was a serious competition," senior team captain Bryan Ismay said. "I honestly wasn't sure we would get enough points to beat Southside, but we pulled it off in the end. It'll be interesting to see what we run into at the regional contest."

The team of 12 broke into four groups of three and competed in 10 different events, which included everything from paper tests to chemistry labs. The groups earn points for each event, which go toward their team's total.

"I was in the air trajectory group and the chemistry group," junior Michelle Ramos said. "For air trajectory we had mini airplane sets and had to retrofit them with different pieces to make the most aerodynamic airplane. I freaked out when I saw mine flew the longest."

Story 2 — Write: 2-line headline with each line counting 18-24

The Project Graduation committee will host the Country Gala, which will include a line dancing class and silent auction, at 7 p.m. Friday at the Leaguetown Country Club.

The event will raise money for Project Graduation, a lock-in for graduated seniors held the night of graduation at the Leaguetown Recreation Center. Project Graduation includes food, games and prizes for attendees.

"I've already got my Western boots shined up and ready to go," committee chair Patti Whitman said. "It's been a while since I've done any real dancing, but I'm ready to raise some money to give our seniors a good send-off."

The silent auction prizes include a trip for two to a Hill Country resort, multiple dinner packages, jewelry and handbags.

"I'm proud of my mom for serving on this committee and putting together a fun Project Graduation for us," senior Kelly Whitman said. "I know last year they raised enough money to buy a car to give away at the end of the night. Hopefully they get a lot of participation at their fundraiser to make that happen again."

Story 3 — Write: 3-line headline with each line counting 14-20

The fine arts department has added chamber orchestra to its music course offerings for 2025-2026. The class is by invitation-only, and directors will cap the section at 12 violins, four violas, four to six cellos and one to two basses.

"We have wanted to offer a chamber section since we started our program five years ago," orchestra director Rosie Sanchez said. "This will give the students an opportunity to play some more difficult music, and it will make for an incredible performance season."

Students can submit audition videos to be considered for chamber orchestra to Sanchez via email.

"I definitely plan to submit my audition for chamber," junior violinist Valerie Keough said. "I've been first chair in the ensemble since I was a sophomore, so I know I'm good enough. I'm looking forward to taking on the different types of music."

Story 4 — Write: 1-line main headline counting 8-14 and 2-line secondary headline with each line counting 24-30

Cosmetology students will offer free manicures for teachers every Friday after school beginning this Friday. Interested teachers should sign up at the front desk in the school's salon.

"Not only will this give us the practice hours we need for certification, but it also will be fun to give something back to our teachers who do so much," senior Jenai Dotson said. "I've always wanted to do this for them."

The students will offer basic manicures, gel, dipping powder, acrylic nails and hand massages.

"It seems like I spend \$100 every time I go to the nail salon now," English teacher Krista Fisher said. "It's so cool that these students are willing to spend their time after school doing this for us."

Each manicure will take between 30 minutes to one hour, leaving time for about 20 slots for manicures each week. The student technicians will not accept tips, but the salon will take donations for supplies like nail polish and tools.

"The students have been working hard to prepare for their certification tests," cosmetology teacher Kendall Brown said. "They're ready to show these teachers that they have the technical know-how to do the perfect manicure and the artistic talent to make nails absolutely beautiful."

Story 5 — Write: 1-line main headline counting 6-12 and a 1-line secondary headline counting 26-32

When junior Fallon James sees a large sword pointed right at her, she feels at home. She has them pointed at her all the time. She even has several of her own.

And after 10 years of fencing, James reached her longtime goal last week when she won the Texas Youth Fencing Championship. Her next goal is to fence for the United States in the Olympics.

"My dad got me into fencing when I was little," she said. "I used to practice with a tree in our back yard with one of his old foils. I loved that he's gotten to see me compete for all these years."

Though she hasn't tried out for Team USA, James said she's been working with coaches for years to reach that goal.

"We've watched hours and hours of the Olympic fencing team from over the years," she said. "I definitely think with my abilities, I have a shot at the Olympics. My coaches agree, and they do so much to encourage me."

James' father said that goal is a realistic one, and he expects his daughter to continue to find success.

"She's a very psychological fencer," her father Mark James said. "We watched lots of fencing videos when we would train over the years, and I think she adopted some of their sounds and mannerisms. She looks better than a movie swordfighter when she's out there. We're very proud of the fencer she's become."

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

The school board voted to add four minutes to the school day at its Monday meeting. Beginning in August, the new bell schedule will have school ending at 2:34 p.m.

"Four minutes might not seem like a lot," Superintendent Keith Simpson said, "but adding these minutes will allow us to have some additional days off throughout the year."

Texas requires 75,600 minutes of instructional time instead of a certain number of days. Simpson said the district will use the additional minutes to provide extra days off during Thanksgiving week and additional professional development days for teachers.

"It's weird that the bell will ring at 2:34 instead of 2:30," junior Elisha Stokey said. "This is such a random time. I don't even know if I'll remember it."

Simpson said the district conducted a survey last year that showed parents, students and staff preferred a longer school day if it meant having the whole week off for Thanksgiving break.

"We've never had a full fall break," Simpson said. "I'm glad the board voted to give the community something it clearly wants. It will give families additional time together and give our staff some extra time to recharge."

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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

main headline

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

main headline

secondary headline

■ Headline Number 6

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

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

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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 printed thesaurus or dictionary. You may write in upstyle or downstyle.
5. Make sure you are within the prescribed count. Under no circumstances should you be under or over the maximum count. Judges are instructed not to consider any headline under or over the prescribed count.
6. Write headlines using active verbs in either present, future or present perfect tense. Follow the style of the headline. If it is a fun story, write a fun headline. If it is a serious story, write a serious headline.
7. Do not sacrifice accuracy for creativity or cuteness.
8. Normally, the main headline is used to grab the reader's attention. It is not necessary, although it is possible, to have a verb in the main headline when you have a secondary headline. The secondary headline should do one of two things: emphasize the significant aspects of the story or emphasize the unusual.
9. AP Style provides guidelines for headline writing. It is not required for contestants to follow AP Style, but a consistent style is recommended.

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

- avoid starting the headline with a verb
- use single quotes
- avoid using the same word twice in a headline
- avoid unfamiliar abbreviations
- do not end the headline with a period or exclamation point

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