

## Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Quiz

In this quiz you can test how much you know about optimising a headline for internet search engines in order to boost a story's ranking on search results pages. The best headlines for search engine optimisation (SEO) help the reader to find the story if they are searching for it or related content on the web. Such headlines are not necessarily the most witty or eye-catching texts. Keep this in mind and you won't go far wrong. What follows is 15 examples of stories where you need to spot the best SEO headline for each.

## 1. Kylie Who? Compton Where?

Picture: Kylie Minogue live in session from the BBC's Maida Vale studios.

You should be so lucky to have been there. Or maybe not? Suit yourself. But which headline is the best for SEO?

Option 1: Kylie Minogue's secret gig in Somerset pub

Option 2: Pop princess performs in sleepy Compton Martin

Option 3: Kylie gig in pub has locals 'Spinning Around'

### Answer

Option 1 is the best choice for SEO.

It includes the most significant keyword information people might reasonably search with; and the most significant keywords are at the beginning. Using the first name and surname also avoids possible ambiguity - something search users try to do, too, when choosing keywords.

## 2. Farewell to a World Cup Legend

Picture: Paul the octopus

He wowed us during football's 2010 FIFA World Cup, but which of these is the most search-friendly headline about his sad demise?

Option 1: Germany mourns demise of tentacled oracle Paul

Option 2: They ink it's all over... It is now

Option 3: Paul the World Cup octopus dies in his tank in Germany

### Answer

Option 3 is the best one for SEO because this one resembles most closely the way people would go about searching for the story.

It contains the words people would search with and - equally importantly - it places the key phrase identifying the subject matter at the beginning of the headline.

### 3. High Water Mark

Picture: Flooded suburb of Depot Hill in Rockhampton, eastern Queensland, Australia.

Which of these headlines has the most chance of being found in a search?

Option 1: Australian city braces for flood peak

Option 2: Queensland floods: Rockhampton braces for flood peak

Option 3: Rockhampton flood to peak today

#### Answer

Option 2 is the best one for SEO. It uses a device called an SEO kicker: putting the most important keywords for this story at the front of the headline followed by a colon.

#### 4. A Star is Dead

Picture: Guitarist Gary Moore performs during a rock festival in 2010.

There's often a big audience for sudden celebrity deaths, but which headline here would get the most hits?

Option 1: Irish heavy metal legend found dead in Spanish hotel

Option 2: Gary Moore, Thin Lizzy guitarist, dies aged 58

Option 3: Renowned rock guitarist Gary Moore dies in Spain

#### Answer

Option 2 is the best for SEO.

When people hear news like this, many will go to their computer and put the name of the person involved into a search engine. If you put the name first in your headline, the story will have a much better chance of ranking well.

## 5. Er... Captain...

Picture: Royal Navy nuclear submarine HMS Astute, which ran aground on 22 October 2010.

How do you ensure your story isn't left high and dry in a search?

Option 1: Shunt for Red October: Nuclear sub Astutue hits rocks

Option 2: World's most advanced nuclear submarine runs aground

Option 3: Nuclear submarine HMS Astute runs aground off Skye

### Answer

Option 3 is the best for SEO.

The keywords you should be targeting are 'nuclear submarine', '(HMS) Astute' and 'runs aground'.

## 6. Big Bird

Picture: Emperor penguins in Antarctica.

Which headline would you p-p-p-pick?

Option 1: Ancient giant penguin unearthed in Peru

Option 2: Fossil evidence for evolution of spheniscidae feathers

Option 3: Revealed: 5ft tall red penguin once waddled the Earth

### Answer

Option 1 is clearly the best for SEO.

Believe it or not, in the week this story was published, tens of thousands of users came to the BBC by searching with the keywords 'giant penguin' and 'ancient giant penguin'.

## 7. Vote Now...

Picture: Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams.

...on which would be the most effective headline for SEO.

Option 1: Gerry Adams to stand for election in Irish Republic

Option 2: Adams to stand for election in the Republic

Option 3: Sinn Fein president to run in Ireland

## Answer

Option 1 is the correct choice.

To get the story, people are likely to search using the name of the politician rather than his job title.

And when you're wondering whether to use a public figure's surname on its own, ask yourself: what would someone search for to find the information? Compare 'Brown' (needs 'Gordon') with 'Obama' (which won't always need 'Barack').

## 8. Dateline Abbottabad

Picture: Osama bin Laden at his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

One of these headlines was used after the killing of Osama bin Laden - but there's a problem. Which is the best headline?

Option 1: Bin Laden images: Publishing 'poses US security risk'

Option 2: Osama bin Laden: Publishing images 'poses US security risk'

Option 3: Publishing bin Laden images 'poses US security risk'

### Answer

Option 1 is the correct choice.

It is better than option two, which has a kicker that could be understood to imply that Bin Laden spoke the words which come after the colon. Avoid this kind of ambiguity by not creating kickers that just contain a person's name.

## 9. We're Desperate for Good SEO

Picture: Men using an outdoor, portable urinal.

Which headline does the job?

Option 1: Eureka! Wee've got it! Street urinals are the answer

Option 2: 'Pee pod' to cut street urination

Option 3: Edinburgh to trial 'pee pod' street urinals

### Answer

Option 3 is the best one for SEO.

The keywords you should be targeting here are 'Edinburgh', 'street urinals', and possibly the name 'pee pod' if it's in common use.

## 10. Top Gear

'The Stig' from the BBC television programme Top Gear.

Which is the top SEO choice?

- Option 1: Stig mystery solved as BBC loses court battle
- Option 2: BBC loses Stig court battle over Ben Collins book
- Option 3: The man in the white suit's identity revealed at last

### Answer

Option 2 is the correct choice because people are likely to search for the name of the driver-turned-author as well as the name of the character he plays.

If you can rank well in search results for a story like this, you can generate a steady flow of traffic to it for a long time.

## 11. Oooh Matron!

Picture: Colonel Moammar Gadhafi's nurse Halyna Kolotnytska.

This could be a thorough examination of your optimising skills.

Option 1: Libyan leader's nurse seeks asylum in Norway

Option 2: Gaddafi's Ukrainian nurse seeks asylum in Norway

Option 3: Gaddafi nurse Galyna Kolotnytska seeks asylum in Norway

### Answer

Option 3 is the best choice for SEO.

If you'd heard about this story but didn't know Kolotnytska's name, you'd probably search for 'Gaddafi nurse' or 'Gaddafi's nurse' - not 'Gaddafi's Ukrainian nurse'. It's fine to use names, even obscure ones like this. If the story's about a particular individual, some people are bound to search for the name; even if they cut and paste it from elsewhere.

## 12. Pay Attention 007

Picture: Daniel Craig as James Bond.

One of these is good SEO, the others are imposters, which one do you choose?

Option 1: Bond film 'suspended indefinitely' amid MGM uncertainty

Option 2: Bond 23 on hold amid uncertainty about future of MGM

Option 3: James Bond film suspended amid MGM studio uncertainty

### Answer

Option 3 is the best choice here.

Notice how it's optimised for both of the main key phrases: 'Bond film' and 'James Bond film'.

### 13. Hair Today...

Picture: A bald man.

Selecting the best headline of these three could leave you scratching your head.

Option 1: Experts claim to discover 'cause' of male baldness

Option 2: Cause of male baldness discovered, experts say

Option 3: Cause of baldness found, says team led by George Cotsarelis

### Answer

Option 2 is the best one for SEO.

It puts the main news point at the front of the headline. You were right not to choose number three just because it contains the lead researcher's name.

Headlines don't need to target people's names if they aren't the main subject of the story.

#### 14. Roman Remains

Picture: A street in Pompeii.

Which is the best headline for this story of decline and fall?

Option 1: More walls collapse at Italy's ancient city of Pompeii

Option 2: Crumbling Pompeii: Two walls collapse after rain

Option 3: Two more walls collapse at crumbling Roman city

#### Answer

Option 2 is the best SEO choice.

It's an example of an SEO kicker being used to frontload the headline with a key phrase. Granted, the addition of "crumbling" demotes "Pompeii" to second place in the keyword hierarchy, but the adjective makes the headline more eye-catching on a search results page. And the placement of "Pompeii" is better than in option one.

**15. And finally...**

Picture: Potatoes for sale in a market in Peru.

Which is the best SEO headline of these three?

Option 1: Peruvian potatoes head to frozen 'doomsday vault'

Option 2: 1500 Peruvian potato species go to Svalbard Seed Bank

Option 3: Svalbard seed vault to take Peruvian potato samples

**Answer**

Option 3 is the best choice here.

On balance, this story would appeal more to people interested in an Arctic seed store preserving food crops for future generations than those interested in potato species. So that's the key phrase to target at the front of the headline.

## **So How Did You Do?**

### **If you scored 0-5**

It looks like you've not really got the hang of this. Check out our video tips to find all you need to know about writing headlines for SEO.

### **If you scored 6-10**

You've grasped the basics but you can do better than that. Check out the tips and examples in our video guide.

### **If you scored 11-15**

An impressive showing but don't rest on your laurels. Use our video guide when you need to refresh your memory about writing for SEO.

### **Generic Feedback**

Headlines for SEO might not be the most memorable or creative, but that's not their job. SEO is about helping people to find information that they're looking for by anticipating the terms they'd use in a search. Don't be downhearted, though. Your creative flair won't go to waste. It can be channelled into other areas of your journalism.