In the headlines

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Tick the correct category for each headline word.

Word | Conflict | Change | Investigation | Promise

1 clash [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
2 overhaul [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
3 grill [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
4 pledge [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
5 shake-up [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
6 rift [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
7 quiz [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
8 vow [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 The two sides clash of over the deal. _____
2 The company plans overhaul of its systems. _____
3 Reporters grill of the minister. _____
4 The party pledge of new investment. _____
5 The board announced shake-up of. _____
6 There is rift of between the leaders. _____
7 Police quiz of the suspect. _____
8 The leader vow of change. _____

3 Choose the headline word that best fits each context.

1 For a serious disagreement between two groups: clash / pledge.
2 For a complete, thorough reorganisation: overhaul / rift.
3 For questioning someone intensely and critically: grill / vow.
4 For a formal promise: pledge / clash.
5 For a significant reorganisation, often of staff: shake-up / grill.
6 For a serious split or disagreement between allies: rift / quiz.

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4 Complete the headlines with words from the box.

clash | grill | overhaul | pledge | quiz | rift | shake-up | vow

Headline A: Leaders 1 _____ over new trade deal
Headline B: Government announces 2 _____ of tax system
Headline C: Committee to 3 _____ CEO over scandal
Headline D: Party 4 _____ to cut taxes
Headline E: Company faces major 5 _____ after review
Headline F: Deepening 6 _____ between allies
Headline G: Police 7 _____ witnesses over incident
Headline H: Minister 8 _____ to resign if plan fails

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Why headlines sound so dramatic

Journalists studying news language note that headline vocabulary differs systematically from ordinary conversational English, favouring short, punchy words like 'clash' or 'grill' over longer equivalents such as 'disagreement' or 'question intensely', primarily due to strict space constraints in print layout. This specialised vocabulary, sometimes called headlinese, has developed its own conventions over decades, including a preference for present tense even when describing completed past events, since present tense conveys a sense of immediacy that readers find more engaging. Understanding this specialised register helps readers decode headlines accurately, since a literal, word-for-word interpretation can sometimes obscure the actual intended meaning.

1 What does headline vocabulary differ systematically from? _____

2 Give two example headline words mentioned and their longer equivalents. _____

3 What is the primary reason for this preference for shorter words? _____

4 What is this specialised vocabulary sometimes called? _____

5 What tense preference does headlinese have, even for past events? _____

6 What does understanding this specialised register help readers do? _____

6 Rewrite each headline phrase using the word in capitals.

1 The two leaders had a serious disagreement. CLASH _____

2 The company plans a complete reorganisation. OVERHAUL _____

3 Reporters questioned the minister intensely. GRILL _____

In the headlines

4 The party made a formal promise. PLEDGE _____

OVER TO YOU

Write 100-120 words summarising a recent news story using at least ten headline-style words (clash, overhaul, grill, pledge, etc.).

[ ] Use at least ten target headline words. [ ] Include polite, precise wording. [ ] Organise the account clearly.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Categories

1 Conflict 2 Change 3 Investigation 4 Promise 5 Change 6 Conflict 7 Investigation 8 Promise

2 Corrections

1 clash over the deal 2 overhaul its systems 3 grill the minister 4 pledges new investment
5 a shake-up 6 a rift between the leaders 7 quiz the suspect 8 vows change

3 Suitable words

1 clash 2 overhaul 3 grill 4 pledge 5 shake-up 6 rift

4 Headlines

1 clash 2 overhaul 3 grill 4 pledges 5 shake-up 6 rift 7 quiz 8 vows

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Ordinary conversational English.
2 'Clash' (disagreement) and 'grill' (question intensely).
3 Strict space constraints in print layout.
4 Headlinese.
5 Present tense, even when describing completed past events.
6 Decode headlines accurately.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 The leaders had a clash. 2 The company plans an overhaul.
3 Reporters grilled the minister. 4 The party made a pledge.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check range, respectful register and clear organisation.