In the headlines

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 headlinese ____	**a** the specialised, compressed style of vocabulary and grammar characteristic of newspaper headlines
2 nominalisation ____	**b** converting a verb or adjective into a noun, often to compress information into fewer words
3 present tense for past events ____	**c** the headline convention of using present tense verbs to describe events that have already happened
4 zero article omission ____	**d** the common headline practice of dropping articles like 'a' or 'the' to save space
5 telescoped syntax ____	**e** the compression of a sentence's structure by omitting normally required grammatical elements
6 punning headline ____	**f** a headline that uses wordplay or double meaning for humorous or attention-grabbing effect
7 lead paragraph ____	**g** the opening paragraph of a news article, summarising the most essential facts
8 inverted pyramid structure ____	**h** a journalistic structure presenting the most important information first, followed by decreasing detail
9 sensationalism ____	**i** the deliberate use of shocking, exaggerated or emotionally provocative language to attract attention
10 clickbait ____	**j** an online headline deliberately designed to provoke curiosity and clicks, sometimes at the expense of accuracy

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For the specialised style of headline vocabulary: headlinese / ordinary prose.

2 For converting a verb into a noun to compress meaning: nominalisation / expansion.

3 For using present tense for past events, a headline convention: present tense for past events / accurate past tense.

4 For dropping articles to save space: zero article omission / full grammatical completeness.

5 For compressing a sentence by omitting elements: telescoped syntax / a fully expanded sentence.

6 For a headline using wordplay for effect: a punning headline / a purely literal headline.

7 For deliberately shocking or exaggerated language to attract attention: sensationalism / sober, measured reporting.

8 For an online headline designed to provoke clicks, sometimes inaccurately: clickbait / a straightforward, accurate summary.

3 Complete the news-language collocations with one word.

1 typical _____ (= headline-specific vocabulary and grammar)

2 a case of _____ (= verb converted into a noun)

3 _____ syntax (= compressed sentence structure)

4 a _____ headline (= uses wordplay)

5 the _____ paragraph (= the opening summary paragraph)

6 the inverted _____ structure (= most important information first)

7 accused of _____ (= shocking, exaggerated language)

8 obvious _____ (= a headline designed purely to provoke clicks)

In the headlines

4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

clickbait | headlinese | inverted pyramid structure | lead paragraph | nominalisation | present tense for past events | punning headline | sensationalism | telescoped syntax | zero article omission

Case A: 'Government Axes Funding' exemplifies 1 _____, dropping the article before 'funding' to save space, a form of 2 _____.
Case B: 'Cuts Cause Chaos' uses 3 _____, the verb form compressed to fit the headline's tight space constraints.
Case C: Despite describing an event that happened yesterday, the headline used 4 _____ for a sense of immediacy.
Case D: 'Bee-lieve It or Not: Honey Prices Soar' is a classic 5 _____, relying on wordplay to catch the reader's eye.
Case E: The article followed the standard 6 _____, placing the most essential facts in the 7 _____ before adding supporting detail.
Case F: Critics accused the tabloid of 8 _____, exaggerating minor events for dramatic effect.
Case G: The headline was widely mocked as obvious 9 _____, promising far more than the actual article delivered, an example of 10 _____ used converting the verb 'invest' into a noun to fit tighter space.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

How headline conventions evolved for a reason

Media historians note that many seemingly arbitrary headline conventions, such as dropping articles or using present tense for past events, developed as practical solutions to genuine constraints of early print layout, where column width and typeface size severely limited how many characters a headline could contain. These conventions persisted even after digital publishing removed most physical space constraints, since readers had by then internalised headlinese as a recognisable and expected genre convention rather than experiencing it as a limitation. Digital media introduced new pressures of its own, however, particularly the incentive to maximise clicks, which some critics argue has encouraged a shift towards clickbait and sensationalism at the expense of the accuracy and restraint traditional print headline conventions, whatever their origin, at least nominally still aimed to preserve.

1 What do media historians note about seemingly arbitrary headline conventions? _____

2 What genuine constraints did these conventions originally solve? _____

3 Why did these conventions persist after digital publishing removed space constraints? _____

In the headlines

4 What new pressure did digital media introduce? _____

5 What have some critics argued this pressure has encouraged? _____

6 What did traditional print headline conventions at least nominally aim to preserve? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

1 The headline dropped the article to save space. ZERO ARTICLE OMISSION _____

2 The verb was converted into a noun to compress the headline. NOMINALISATION _____

3 The headline used wordplay to attract attention. PUNNING HEADLINE _____

4 The online headline was designed purely to provoke clicks. CLICKBAIT _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word account analysing how digital media pressures have changed traditional headline writing conventions, distinguishing observation from evaluative judgement.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

In the headlines

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Connotation

1 headlinese 2 nominalisation 3 present tense for past events 4 zero article omission 5 telescoped syntax 6 a punning headline 7 sensationalism 8 clickbait

3 Collocations

1 headlinese 2 nominalisation 3 telescoped 4 punning 5 lead 6 pyramid 7 sensationalism 8 clickbait

4 Case notes

1 zero article omission 2 telescoped syntax 3 telescoped syntax 4 present tense for past events 5 punning headline 6 inverted pyramid structure 7 lead paragraph 8 sensationalism 9 clickbait 10 nominalisation

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 That they seem arbitrary but developed as practical solutions to genuine constraints.
2 Genuine constraints of early print layout, where column width and typeface size limited headline length.
3 Because readers had internalised headlinese as a recognisable and expected genre convention.
4 The incentive to maximise clicks.
5 A shift towards clickbait and sensationalism.
6 Accuracy and restraint.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 It showed zero article omission. 2 It was a case of nominalisation.
3 It was a punning headline. 4 It was clickbait.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.