

# FACTS ABOUT LAYOUT

(And some about copy)

Many also apply online



*Captions are very important; they are heavily read.*

## This classic layout is by far the easiest for readers to follow.

This subhead makes transition into the body copy easier for the reader.

**D**ropped initial caps like this also lure people into the body of the copy.

Moreover, a short first paragraph like the one above makes it easier for people to get started on your story. And there are other things to remember.

For example, readers find it easier to take in short words, sentences and paragraphs - the latter containing only one or two thoughts.

**Why is this?**

Because people are not really concentrating when they read copy, and won't make the effort to grasp difficult thoughts - even if they are intelligent, which many aren't.

### **Crossheads tell the story**

Breaking your copy up with crossheads makes it far more digestible for the reader than one unbroken block of words.

The crosshead should not be clever or tricky, but should communicate and encapsulate the story for people whose eyes are hovering over your ad.

Many people imagine that advertisements are read religiously from start to finish. Would that it were so! In fact,

readers tend to start where they please, and stop reading when they please. Very few advertisements indeed get read in full.

### **Bold elements attract**

We use bold elements - headings, illustrations, the like - to lead people into the advertisement. For that reason, all these elements must work very hard. Unless one of them catches the eye, your ad will fail.

The most important element is the headline/picture combination. Together they should communicate almost instantly what the advertisement is all about and if possible demonstrate the benefits.

This is utterly vital, because research years ago revealed two important facts: first, most advertisements are never seen for longer than two or three seconds; and second, that most are never read beyond the headline.

### **Captions are important**

After a headline and picture the things that people's eyes generally turn to most are captions. As children we learned to read by looking at pictures with explanations under them. So it is very unwise to have a picture without a caption.

Sometimes, of course, the headline itself acts as a caption. Generally speaking, if you cannot find anything interesting to say about your picture, then the chances are it is not a good picture.

### **Bold coupons help**

One element which will actually increase readership of your advertisement is the presence of the coupon. What is more, the bolder the coupon, the higher the readership and the response is likely to be.

Pay no attention to languid aesthetes who tell you the coupons will kill your image. I have yet to see any evidence to suggest this is so.

### **Sample coupon**

Return address for the coupon

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone no. \_\_\_\_\_



*Captions are very important; they are heavily read.*

# If you set your copy in sans serif type you pay a heavy price indeed

A page of serif reset in sans serif can reduce good comprehension from 67% to 12%. can you afford this?

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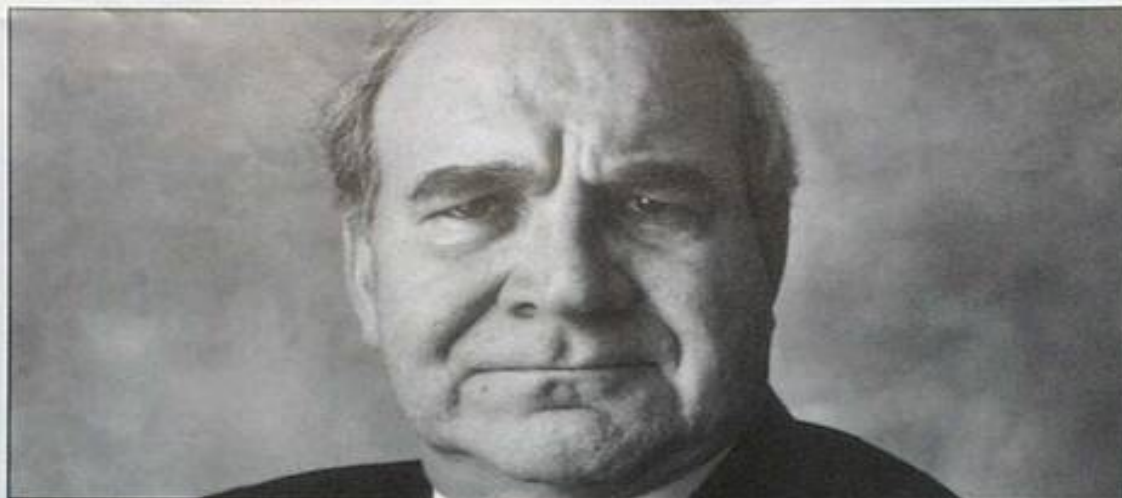
Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone no.





*Captions are very important; they are heavily read.*

## Reversed out copy kills readership - though many people don't know it

A reversed-out full page charity ad doubled response when it was reset in lack and white

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### Sample coupon

Return address for the coupon

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone nos. \_\_\_\_\_



*Captions are very important, they are heavily read.*

## When you set copy to a long measure, the eye has to travel back and forth. Your reader will not make the effort.

This subhead makes transition into the body copy easier for the reader.

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## Coupons should look like coupons

Return address for the coupon

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone no. \_\_\_\_\_



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The crosshead should not be clever

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# Don't block off two columns like this. People won't keep reading below the illustration



Photographs are more believable than illustrations

take in short words, sentences and paragraphs - the latter containing only one or two thoughts.

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or tricky copy should communicate and encapsulate the story for people whose eyes are hovering over your ad.

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### Sample coupon

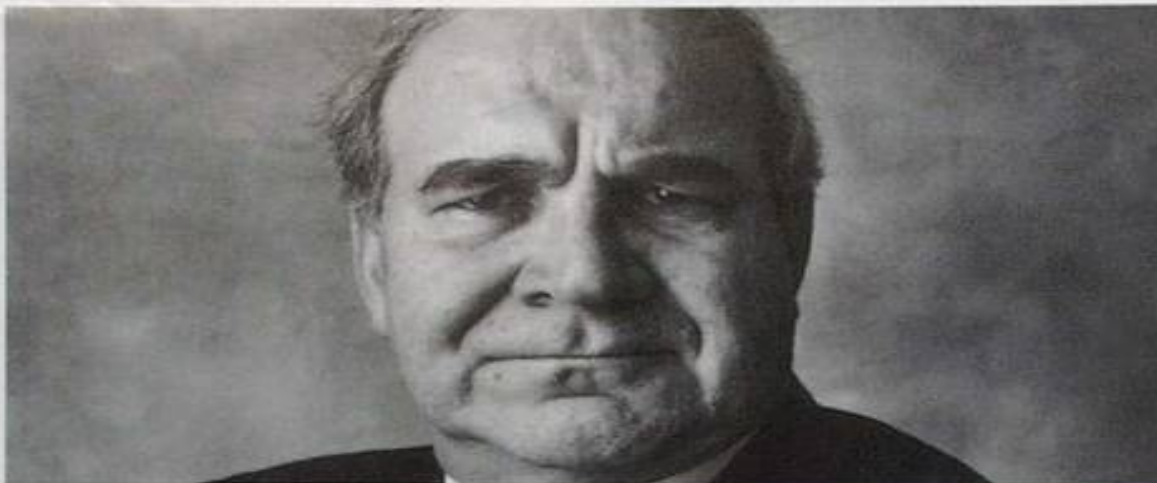
Return address for the coupon

Name

Address

Postcode

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## A badly positioned coupon can reduce response

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**Silly coupon position.  
It's hard to cut out**

Return address for the coupon

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone no. \_\_\_\_\_

elements must work very hard. Unless one of them catches the eye, your ad will fail.

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#### **Sample coupon**

Return address for the coupon

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone no.

When the headline is placed below copy, many cannot be bothered to move their eyes up to start reading



*Pictures with human faces in them work better*





*Italics are as easy to read as roman*

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## Headlines marooned like this kill the flow of the copy

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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CAPTIONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT; THEY ARE HEAVILY READ.

## CAPS ARE DIFFICULT TO READ BECAUSE THE EYE RECOGNISES SHAPES - NOT INDIVIDUAL LETTERS

THIS SUBHEAD MAKES TRANSITION INTO THE BODY COPY EASIER FOR THE READER.

**D**ROPPED INITIAL CAPS LIKE THIS ALSO LURE PEOPLE INTO THE BODY OF THE COPY.

MOREOVER, A SHORT FIRST PARAGRAPH LIKE THE ONE ABOVE MAKES IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO GET STARTED ON YOUR STORY. AND THERE ARE OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER.

FOR EXAMPLE, READERS FIND IT EASIER TO TAKE IN SHORT WORDS, SENTENCES AND PARAGRAPHS - THE LATTER CONTAINING ONLY ONE OR TWO THOUGHTS.

Why is this?

BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE NOT REALLY CONCENTRATING WHEN THEY READ COPY, AND WON'T MAKE THE EFFORT TO GRASP DIFFICULT THOUGHTS - EVEN IF THEY ARE INTELLIGENT, WHICH MANY AREN'T.

### CROSSHEADS TELL THE STORY

BREAKING YOUR COPY UP WITH CROSSHEADS MAKES IT FAR MORE DIGESTIBLE FOR THE READER THAN ONE UNBROKEN BLOCK OF WORDS.

THE CROSSHEAD SHOULD NOT BE CLEVER OR TRICKY, BUT SHOULD COMMUNICATE AND ENCAPSULATE THE STORY FOR PEOPLE WHOSE EYES ARE HOVERING OVER YOUR AD.

MANY PEOPLE IMAGINE THAT ADVERTISEMENTS ARE READ RELIGIOUSLY FROM START TO FINISH. WOULD THAT IT WERE SO! IN FACT, READERS TEND TO START WHERE THEY PLEASE, AND STOP READING

WHEN THEY PLEASE. VERY FEW ADVERTISEMENTS INDEED GET READ IN FULL.

### BOLD ELEMENTS ATTRACT

WE USE BOLD ELEMENTS - HEADINGS, ILLUSTRATIONS, THE LIKE - TO LEAD PEOPLE INTO THE ADVERTISEMENT. FOR THAT REASON, ALL THESE ELEMENTS MUST WORK VERY HARD. UNLESS ONE OF THEM CATCHES THE EYE, YOUR AD WILL FAIL.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IS THE HEADLINE/PICTURE COMBINATION. TOGETHER THEY SHOULD COMMUNICATE ALMOST INSTANTLY WHAT THE ADVERTISEMENT IS ALL ABOUT AND IF POSSIBLE DEMONSTRATE THE BENEFITS.

THIS IS UTTERLY VITAL, BECAUSE RESEARCH YEARS AGO REVEALED TWO IMPORTANT FACTS: FIRST, MOST ADVERTISEMENTS ARE NEVER SEEN FOR LONGER THAN TWO OR THREE SECONDS; AND SECOND, THAT MOST ARE NEVER READ BEYOND THE HEADLINE.

### CAPTIONS ARE IMPORTANT

AFTER A HEADLINE AND PICTURE THE THINGS THAT PEOPLE'S EYES GENERALLY TURN TO MOST ARE CAPTIONS. AS CHILDREN WE LEARNED TO READ BY LOOKING AT PICTURES WITH EXPLANATIONS UNDER THEM. SO IT IS VERY UNWISE TO HAVE A PICTURE WITHOUT A CAPTION.

SOMETIMES, OF COURSE, THE HEADLINE ITSELF ACTS AS A CAPTION. GENERALLY

SPAKING, IF YOU CANNOT FIND ANYTHING INTERESTING TO SAY ABOUT YOUR PICTURE, THEN THE CHANCES ARE IT IS NOT A GOOD PICTURE.

### BOLD COUPONS HELP

ONE ELEMENT WHICH WILL ACTUALLY INCREASE READERSHIP OF YOUR ADVERTISEMENT IS THE PRESENCE OF THE COUPON. WHAT IS MORE, THE BOLDER THE COUPON, THE HIGHER THE READERSHIP AND THE RESPONSE IS LIKELY TO BE.

PAY NO ATTENTION TO LANGUID AESTHETES WHO TELL YOU THE COUPONS WILL KILL YOUR IMAGE. I HAVE YET TO SEE ANY EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THIS IS SO.

### SAMPLE COUPON

RETURN ADDRESS FOR THE COUPON

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_



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Moreover, a short first paragraph like the one above makes it easier for people to get started on your story. And there are other things to remember.

For example, readers find it easier to take in short words, sentences and paragraphs - the latter containing only one or two thoughts.

Why is this?

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## Justified - OK

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## Centred - crazy