Unit 7:1 Counting Headlines

While computers have taken much of the guesswork out of writing headlines, it is still necessary to understand the process of counting out headlines to make them fit. Headlines obviously cannot hang off the page or run into other stories on the page, nor should they be too short for the space allotted. Knowing the unit count system will help students understand whether or not a particular headline will fit the space.

Each letter and punctuation mark is assigned a unit count, which remains the same, in relationship to other letters and symbols in the same typestyle and size, no matter what typeface or size is used.

The unit count system may vary slightly from textbook to textbook, but the following is a generally accepted system:

Letter	Count
Capital I	1
Capital M, W	2
All other capital letters	1.5
Lowercase f, l, i, t, j	.5
Lowercase m, w	1.5
All other lowercase letters	1
Spaces	.5
Numerals except for 1	1
The number 1	.5
Question mark, dash	1
All other punctuation	.5

The first step in learning how to write a good headline is learning how to count a headline out.

Using the counting system above, let's count out the following headline:

Bears win district championship _____

B=1.5
e=1
a=1
r=1
s=1

The total for the first word is 5.5. Add .5 for the space, then:
w=1.5
i=.5
n=1

Unit 7:1 Counting Headlines

That is 3 units that we will add to the 5.5 in the first word and the .5 for the space. So far, we have a total of 9 units.

Add .5 for the space, then:
d=1
i=.5
s=1
t=.5
r=1
i=.5
c=1
t=.5

This totals 6.5 units to add to the 9 units, totalling 15.5

Add .5 for the space, then:
c=1
h=1
a=1
m=1.5
p=1
i=.5
o=1
n=1
s=1
h=1
i=.5
p=1

Add 12 to the 15.5 units, for a grand total of 27.5.

The unit count for the headline is 27.5.

Using the unit count system, you will count out the headlines in the following assignment.

Introduction to Journalism © by Dianne Smith, published by *TEACHINGpoint*
as part of the *Expert Systems for Teachers™* Series

Pint Name _____Period _____ Date _____

Activity 7:1 Counting Headlines

Directions: Using the unit counting system below, count out the headlines. Each line must be counted separately.

Letter	Count
Capital I	1
Capital M, W	2
All other capital letters	1.5
Lowercase f, l, i, t, j	.5
Lowercase m, w	1.5
All other lowercase letters	1
Spaces	.5
Numerals except for 1	1
The number 1	.5
Question mark, dash	1
All other punctuation	.5

1. Schwarzenegger wins_____
   California governorship_____

2. School board votes to fire driver_____

3. Clock tower struck by lightning_____

4. New school's colors_____
   Green, gold, white _____

5. Shelter seeks food donations_____

6. AIDS breakthrough near, lab says _____

7. Bush supports voucher system _____

8. Company recalls defective plush toys ____

9. 7 die in Philadelphia plane crash _____

10. School board_____
    approves dates ___ _
    for '04 calendar_____

11. Government raises _____
    terror alert level _____
    to orange again_____

12. City to widen_____
    High Star, Cook _____

13. 'The fit is it,' says celebrity stylist____

14. 'Trading Spaces'_____
    favorite show_____
    among teenagers_____

15. Bears beat Rams 15-2 _____

16. Air fares to go down again_____

17. Stores close for holiday_____

18. Mars probe silent after descent _____

19. Bans on US beef imports expand_____

20. Dairy under quarantine_____
    because of mad cow report___