

## Using subheadings effectively

Your reader should be able to flick through a document and know exactly what it's about just by reading the subheadings.

So make sure the subheadings actually say something about the content. They can play a major role in drawing in your reader and getting them to engage with your document.

The following is a checklist of tips and examples to help you write effective subheadings. You can remember the techniques using the acronym **DIVE IN**.

**Direct:** be **direct** and straight to the point

- *IMF calls for further cuts*
- *Corporation tax rate reduced*
- *Water consumption reduced*
- *[Company name] provides value for money*
- *Fossil fuels: down but not out*

**Interest:** make sure the subheading says something that will **interest** your intended readers

- *Real estate outperforms equities*
- *Noisy neighbours may be protected by new law*
- *Metals play vital role in low-carbon future*
- *How to expand our customer base*
- *Save energy, save money*
- *Quality at lower cost: making it happen*

**Verb:** whenever possible, include a **verb** (doing/being word)

- *Asia reels from inflation pressures* (rather than *Inflations pressures in Asia*)
- *Police enforce intellectual property rights* (rather than *Enforcement of intellectual property rights*)
- *Mining and metals industry achieves positive change* (rather than *Achievement of positive change by mining and metals industry*)
- *How we deliver quality assurance services* (rather than *The delivery of quality assurance services*)
- *Renewables take over* (rather than *The takeover by renewables*)

**Evoke curiosity:** try using a question to **evoke** curiosity

- *Which equities to hold?*
- *When are conversational emails enforceable contracts?*
- *Are we doing enough to help build trust?*
- *What are the costs and benefits?*
- *Ready for the low-carbon future?*

**Insight:** give an **insight** on which you will then expand

- *Real estate to outperform*
- *Proper self-regulation by the press works best*
- *Engagement with local communities is essential*
- *Organisation of services affects market potential*
- *Natural gas has advantages beyond power generation*

**Number:** include a **number**

- *Five ways to make your profits grow*
- *Seven ways to prevent data theft*
- *Five ways to combat climate change*
- *Three ways to improve quality*
- *Nine ways to see China in a clearer light*
- *Five ways to improve the quality of care*

And remember the **PS:**

**Play on words:** try using word**play** – but **only** if you think it's appropriate to the tone of your document and the intended reader.

- *Face the storm with catastrophe bonds*
- *[Company] in hot water as legal row simmers*
- *'Healthy' competition has benefits for patients*

**Short:** keep your subheadings fairly **short**

They should be long enough to say something meaningful, but short enough to be absorbed quickly.