Headline English

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1 Match each headline device with its description.

1 article omission	____	a using a short item to carry a longer meaning
2 auxiliary omission	____	b removing a, an or the
3 noun stacking	____	c leaving out a form of be or have
4 historical present	____	d placing several nouns before a head noun
5 infinitive future	____	e wording that permits more than one grammatical reading
6 passive ellipsis	____	f using a present form for a completed news event
7 lexical compression	____	g omitting the auxiliary from a passive construction
8 structural ambiguity	____	h using to plus verb for a planned event

2 Complete the analytical labels.

article | auxiliary | future | historical | lexical | noun | passive | structural

1 _____ omission

2 _____ omission

3 _____ stacking

4 the _____ present

5 infinitive _____

6 _____ ellipsis

7 _____ compression

8 _____ ambiguity

3 Choose the device illustrated by the headline.

1 *President Opens Summit*: *historical present / infinitive future*.

2 *Minister to Address Parliament*: *infinitive future / passive ellipsis*.

3 *Rare Painting Stolen*: *passive ellipsis / noun stacking*.

4 *City Transport Funding Crisis*: *noun stacking / article omission*.

5 *Bank Chief Quits* omits an article: *article omission / lexical compression*.

6 *Workers Injured in Blast* omits *were*: *auxiliary omission / historical present*.

7 *Talks Stall* uses one short verb for a longer idea: *lexical compression / noun stacking*.

8 *Police Help Dog Bite Victim* allows two readings: *structural ambiguity / passive ellipsis*.

4 Complete the headline audit with terms from the box.

article omission | **auxiliary omission** | **historical present** | **infinitive future** | **lexical compression** | **noun stacking** | **passive ellipsis** | **structural ambiguity**

Mayor Opens Arts Centre uses the **1** _____ for recent news and **2** _____ before *arts centre*. *Mayor to Visit Again* uses the **3** _____. *Three Arrested* combines **4** _____ with **5** _____. In *City Housing Budget Row*, heavy **6** _____ reduces readability. The word *row* creates **7** _____ by replacing a longer phrase. *Teachers Help Child Care Workers* risks **8** _____ because the noun grouping is unclear.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Ambiguity is not always a joke

Compressed grammar can accidentally connect words in more than one way. A reader may initially parse Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant as if the court intends to shoot someone. Such garden-path headlines are memorable, but in serious reporting the joke can obscure harm or misidentify agency. Editors can repair ambiguity by restoring a preposition, auxiliary or relative clause. A few extra words may increase accuracy more than they reduce impact.

1 What can compressed grammar do accidentally? _____

2 What false interpretation can the example produce? _____

3 Why are garden-path headlines memorable? _____

4 What two harms may the joke cause? _____

5 Name two elements editors can restore. _____

6 When are extra words worthwhile? _____

6 Rewrite to remove ambiguity.

1 Police Help Crash Victims Recover Bags _____

2 Teachers Discuss Student Safety Problems _____

3 Hospital Appeals Board Decision _____

4 Council Backs School Meals Campaign _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a **120-150 word** headline audit. Compare three possible headlines for one story and recommend the clearest, most accurate version.

[ ] Use at least six analytical terms. [ ] Test possible readings. [ ] Balance impact against accuracy.

ANSWER KEY

1 Headline devices

1 **b** 2 **c** 3 **d** 4 **f** 5 **h** 6 **g** 7 **a** 8 **e**

2 Analytical labels

1 **article** 2 **auxiliary** 3 **noun** 4 **historical** 5 **future** 6 **passive** 7 **lexical** 8 **structural**

3 Device identification

1 **historical present** 2 **infinitive future** 3 **passive ellipsis** 4 **noun stacking**
5 **article omission** 6 **auxiliary omission** 7 **lexical compression** 8 **structural ambiguity**

4 Headline audit

1 **historical present** 2 **article omission** 3 **infinitive future** 4 **passive ellipsis**
5 **auxiliary omission** 6 **noun stacking** 7 **lexical compression** 8 **structural ambiguity**

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Connect words in more than one way. 2 The court will shoot the defendant. 3 Their false first reading.
4 Obscure harm or misidentify agency. 5 Any two: preposition, auxiliary, relative clause. 6 When they improve accuracy.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 Police help crash victims **recover their bags**. 2 Teachers discuss **problems with student safety**. 3 The hospital **appeals the board's decision**. 4 The council backs **the campaign for school meals**.

Over to you: Answers will vary. Check parsing, accuracy and editorial justification.