

Cristina Vignolo Córca's suggestion to improve the the "overflow warning" revision on page 85:

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Our text

THIS IS AN OVERFLOW
WARNING
NOT TO BE USED
AS AN ASHTRAY

This sign in a county court robing room was misread, perhaps because the fourth line was clearly part of the same sentence as the third, suggesting subliminally that the second line should be read with the first. It was, after all, not formatted as a heading. But who would use a warning as an ashtray? The court might have been troubled by fewer delinquent advocates if they had rearranged it to something like this

Overflow

Not to be used as an ashtray

changing the emphasis according to which part of the message they wanted to stress.

CVC

1 Although in terms of economy of words [yours] is the best suggestion, I'm still scratching my head about giving protagonism to the word which — in my humble opinion — "deserves" it most, i.e., warning, instead of overflow. What about something like this:

WARNING

This overflow is not to be used as an ashtray

After all, the sign was put as a warning, that's why I feel that this word should come in full view.

I also think that "WARNING" has a higher linguistic hierarchy than "overflow", which doesn't put the readers on their guards as strongly as the former. One thing that the neuropsycholinguistic sciences always emphasize is how closely linked the choice of words is with the impact that the perception and, especially, the immediate decoding of a message will have on the human brain.

2 [I prefer the all-caps heading.] My reason for this is my **personal** belief in using full capitalisation to enhance

MA

My immediate reaction was to agree with Cristina (whose judgment I respect). But on coming back to it fresh a day or two later I wondered if — in this context — either version isn't valid? My wording focuses on informing and forbidding, rather than on warning (which is more appropriate to danger than to telling supposedly responsible advocates to stop blocking the overflow with their cigarettes ends).

A fair point, and a warning not to rely thoughtlessly on my house style, which tells

the protagonism and brain impact ..., particularly when it comes to putting people on their guard and using signs with either a protective or mandatory intention, such as DANGER, CAUTION, WARNING, DO NOT CROSS or KEEP OUT. The cautionary ... impact of **WARNING** is not the same as that of **Warning**.

me to prefer lower case to give a word more shape. A short all-caps heading may indeed have more impact.