

# 'Ad Class' To Your Classified Ads!

By Meredith Pond

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Classified ads are quite likely the most popular form of advertising out there. Not only are they cheap, but they can reach a huge audience in just one placement. And, most importantly, they really do the trick for your business.

However, even the inexpensive and well-meaning classified ad can be ineffective, and even detrimental to your business if it's not written well. Knowing this, there are a few things to keep in mind when planning your next classified ad.

Before you even sit down at the keyboard to write your ad, it's critical that you take a few minutes to look through the newspaper or log onto the Internet. With a critical eye, read through the ads placed by others. As you do this, there are several things you need to consider: First and foremost, ask yourself whether these ads would grab your attention as a casual reader. If the answer is no, make a mental (or written) note of the phrases used to begin those ads. Every ad needs a headline that will grab the reader's attention without sounding too unprofessional. Generally, the words FREE, BONUS, or MONEY will help grab a reader's attention from the outset.

Next, examine the ads for content. Do they give you enough information that they sound credible, or do they just throw a lot of hype at you without giving up any real facts? An effective ad will have just enough hype to make the product or service sound enticing, but not so much that there's no room for substance.

As you browse, keep in mind that after reading an ad, you should have a basic sense of what the product is, and what it can do for you. If you're left wondering, it's not a good ad. Try to keep your ads to about 50 words, but choose those words wisely-- don't be wasteful. Make copies of the unsatisfying ads you find and keep them handy when writing your own, so you have an example of what NOT to do.

When writing your ad, you'll need to walk a fairly fine line between making your product sound exciting, and making promises that sound too good to be true. As you peruse the classified section, take notice of ads that make these lofty promises. Doesn't it make you skeptical from the get-go? Chances are if you're a bit suspicious, your audience will be, too. For example, an ad that promises readers they'll become millionaires overnight will be hard-pressed to find believers. Therefore, when composing your own ads, try to refrain from making promises or guarantees that you wouldn't take seriously yourself.

Finally, as you read through others' ads, you'll probably find some awkward sentences, misspelled

words, or improper use of words like YOUR and YOU'RE ("your" is possessive, "you're" means "you are"). Just like excessive hype or lofty promises, mistakes in your copy will only serve to undermine your credibility.

Overall, make sure your ads will get noticed, convey the facts, and get people excited about your product, without making them suspicious of your guarantees, or wary of your hype. If you can do that, your classified ad will serve you and your business well.

Meredith Pond is a professional and freelance writer with extensive experience working on the web. Meredith provides writing and editing services to individuals and businesses alike at great prices. See <http://www.geocities.com/wordsmith25/MeredithPond.html> for details. For instant info on prices and services, send a blank email to <mailto:meredithpond@getresponse.com>. Contact Meredith directly at <mailto:wordsmith25@hotmail.com>.

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