

# Differences Between Broadsheet and Tabloid Newspapers

In the world of print journalism, the two main formats for newspapers are **broadsheet** and **tabloid**. Strictly speaking, these terms refer to the page sizes of such papers, but the different formats have distinct histories and associations.

## History of Broadsheets and Tabloids

Broadsheet newspapers first appeared in 18th-century Britain after the government began to tax newspapers based on their number of pages. That made **large-format papers** with fewer pages cheaper to print than smaller ones with more pages.

Tabloid newspapers, perhaps due to their smaller size, are often associated with shorter, crisper stories. Tabloids date to the early 1900s when they were referred to as "small newspapers" containing condensed stories easily consumed by everyday readers. Tabloid readers traditionally came from the lower working classes, but that has changed somewhat in the past few decades. The New York Daily News, the most widely circulated tabloid in the United States, for example, had won 11 Pulitzer Prizes, journalism's highest honor, as of June 2018. Even with the **blurring** of clear distinctions between the economic and social classes of their readership, however, advertisers continue to target different markets when buying space in broadsheets and tabloids.

## What Are Tabloids?

In the technical sense, tabloid refers to a newspaper that typically measures 11 by 17 inches—smaller than a broadsheet—and is usually no more than five columns across. Many city dwellers prefer tabloids because they are easier to carry and read on the subway or bus.

One of the first tabloids in the U.S. was The New York Sun, started in 1833. It cost only a penny and was easy to carry, and its crime reporting and illustrations proved popular with working-class readers.

Tabloids still tend to be more **irreverent** in their writing style than their broadsheet brothers. In a crime story, a broadsheet will refer to a *police officer*, while a tabloid will use the term *cop*. And while a broadsheet might spend dozens of column inches on "serious" news—say, a major bill in Congress—a tabloid is more likely **to zero in on** a sensational crime story or celebrity gossip.

The word *tabloid* has come to be associated with supermarket checkout aisle papers, such as the National Enquirer, that **focus on splashy, lurid stories** about celebrities, but tabloids such as the Daily News, the Chicago Sun-Times, and the Boston Herald focus on serious, **hard-hitting journalism**.

In Britain, tabloid papers—also known as "red tops" for their front-page banners—tend to be racier and more sensational than their American counterparts. The type of **unscrupulous reporting methods** employed by some "tabs" led to the phone-hacking scandal and closing of the News of the World, one of Britain's biggest tabs, and resulted in calls for greater regulation of the British press.

## What Are Broadsheets?

Broadsheet refers to the most common newspaper format, which is typically around 15 inches wide to 20 or more inches long in the U.S., though sizes vary around the world. Broadsheet papers tend to feature six columns and employ a traditional approach to **newsgathering** that emphasizes **in-depth coverage** and a sober writing tone in articles and editorials aimed at fairly affluent, educated readers. Many of the nation's most respected, influential newspapers—The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal, for example—are broadsheet papers.

In recent years many broadsheets have been reduced in size to cut printing costs. For instance, The New York Times was narrowed by 1 1/2 inches in 2008. Other broadsheet papers, including USA Today, The Los Angeles Times, and The Washington Post, also have been trimmed.

## Broadsheets and Tabloids Today

Newspapers, whether broadsheets or tabloids, are experiencing difficult times these days. Readership has slipped for all newspapers as many readers have turned to the Internet for **up-to-the-minute news** from a variety of online sources, often for free. For example, AOL, an Internet portal, offers online news ranging from mass shootings and Supreme Court decisions to sports and weather, all **at no charge**.

CNN, the Cable News Network, is known mostly for **on-air coverage** of domestic and international issues, but it also has a well-established website that provides free articles and video clips of major domestic and foreign news. It's difficult for broadsheets and tabloids to compete with organizations providing such **wide-ranging, cost-free coverage**, especially when papers have traditionally charged readers for access to their news and information stories.

## Internet Forces Changes

The online versions of these broadsheets, however, are more tabloid-like in format; they have flashier headlines, attention-grabbing color, and more graphics than the print editions. The New York Times' online edition is four columns wide, similar to a tabloid format, though the second column tends to be wider than the other three.

The main headline for The Times' online edition of June 20, 2018, was: "Trump Retreats After Border Outcry," which was splashed in flashy italic type above a main story and several **sidebars** about the public debate over a U.S. policy that separated parents seeking to enter the country from their children. The print edition for the same day—which, of course, was one news cycle behind the online edition—featured a much more sedate headline for its main story: "GOP Moves to End Trump's Family Separation Policy, but Can't Agree How."

As readers **gravitate toward** briefer stories and instant access to news via the Internet, more broadsheets may begin to adopt tabloid formats online. The push seems to be to capture readers' attention with tabloid techniques instead of relying on a more in-depth, broadsheet-like, serious tone.

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