

Titles



While titles are often overlooked by writers, they are key to introducing readers to a text and encouraging them to read the work and engage with the ideas. Below are some helpful guidelines for composing a title, but always tailor your work to your audience and assignment.

Functions of a Title

- Makes the general topic known and indicates your particular stance, helping differentiate it from similar texts.
- Helps readers find and select your work by using searchable, key terms and generating interest in your topic.
- Sets the tone for the paper and alerts the reader about what to expect.
- Gains the trust and interest of the reader before any text is read.

Possible Sources for a Title

- A pertinent phrase from the paper.
- An adaptable quotation from another source.
- A key phrase or idea from the thesis statement.
- A relevant question addressed in the paper.

Various Options for a Title

Summarize the issue addressed in the paper.

Example: The Impact of Nitrous Oxide on Lake Ontario's Ecosystem
This title succinctly brings together the main topic of the paper.

Use words that surprise or encourage curiosity.

Example: Marxist America
Since most US residents think America is democratic and not Marxist, this title surprises the reader.

Use words or phrases that have double or clever meanings.

Example: Love Stinks: Pheromones and Their Influence in Dating Relationships
The phrase *Love Stinks* uses the word *stink* in both its literal and figurative meanings.

Take a common phrase and put a spin on it.

Example: When Good Writers Go Bad
This title could be used for a paper on the common writing errors of college students.

Considerations for Titles

Effective titles allow readers to both understand the content of your paper decide whether or not they will read your it. Consider the following suggestions as you create a title for your paper:

- Be mindful of the audience. Do not offend your reader in an attempt to generate interest.
- Make the title fit the paper content, tone, and audience. If your paper is a strict report of information, a humorous title may not be appropriate.
- Revise the title as you revise the paper. If the major ideas of the paper change, then the title will have to reflect the change in topic.
- Don't use quotes around the title of your paper (unless it is a quotation).
- For a published work, include key terms readers will use to search for similar texts in your title.
- When in doubt, go for a short, simple, and straightforward title over an overly lengthy or complex title.