

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

- 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's 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 unduly lengthy or complex title.