

Tips for Finding a Good Title

A good title is an important part of a paper; it communicates what the topic of the paper will be and catches your reader's attention. Unfortunately, thinking of a great title can also be extremely difficult. Here are a few suggestions:

Do It Last

How can you come up with a title when you don't even know what your paper is going to be about? A title is like putting a cherry on a sundae. It adds to the sundae, but you don't begin with the cherry first. While writing a title first may work for some writers, it may not work for all. After your paper is written, choose a phrase or two that strikes you as relevant and interesting. Maybe one of these phrases can be worked into a title.

Don't Be Cute

You might get a good chuckle out of the clever pun you've found for your paper. Maybe all your friends thought it was a hilarious title. But bear in mind that your professor might not find it so funny. In fact, they may even find it *offensive*.

- Bad Titles: "World War II: Hitler's Revenge!"
"Oh My God, They Killed Lincoln!"

Don't Be Dull

There's nothing more horrendously dull than a title that just curls up and dies while it is being read. These kinds of titles state the obvious and include titles that communicate *nothing* but the general topic of the paper. Dull titles are often vague, like these:

Bad Titles: "Christopher Columbus"
"Dropping the Atomic Bomb"

Give Your Reader Information About Your Paper

Readers should have a general idea about what your topic and thesis will be. This is especially important for argumentative or informational papers (such as when you're answering a specific question).

Good Titles: "Paradise Lost: Columbus' Destruction of America"
"Quest for Fire: How the U.S. Won the Atom Bomb Race"

Look To Your Paper

Sometimes a good title can be mined from your paper itself. Read through your paper and look out for distinctive phrases or quotes that could work as a title.

Ask A Reader

Ask a writing consultant, classmate, roommate, a friend what he or she thinks your paper is about. This "say back" could help you find a central idea for your title.