

How to Find a Good Title for Your Paper

1. USE a memorable line from the essay itself. *Love Should Start Little, Decidedly Delicious, Added to the List, The Best Balance, No Drunkalogues Here, Not Open for Discussion, Winter Came, I'm Dying to Meet You, Travel Down That Road.*
2. CHOOSE a concrete image—something the reader can hear, see, taste, smell, or feel. *Screaming, Abuelita's Pozolé, Burnt Toast, Knobby Knees, He Smelt Like Blood.*
3. ASK a question. *Strange or Inappropriate? What Were You Thinking? When Will It End? Where is the Justice? Free or Cheap?* (Note: If you choose to use a question as your title, be sure to answer that question somewhere in your paper.)
4. USE a popular expression. *Be My Guest, Damaged Goods, Something's Gotta Give, The Horse's Mouth, Good As Gold, The Whole Nine Yards, Sitting Pretty, Step Up.*
5. TRY a play on words or a "twist" of an existing expression. *Burglars Can Be Choosers, The Cancelled Czech, A Hearse of a Different Color, Suture Self.*
6. GIVE us a hint. *Sea of Harleys, Perception of Normalcy, Mini-Mental-Money-Murders, A Thorn Still Pricks Me.* (Note: Be a little mysterious but not too mysterious.)
7. TRY word association (words that have a "double meaning" and refer to more than one thing). *The Dead Zone, A Good Mark, Forced Labor, Howl with Rage, Step Up My Game.*
8. USE an "ing" word to give a sense of action. *Pleading Guilty, Bearing Thorns, Shredding Walzer, Tackling Thoreau, Wild Wilde, Pondering Plato, Backing Bacon.*
9. DIVE into a thesaurus and rework a dull title into something more interesting. *Affairs of U.S. Presidents* becomes *Pondering Presidential Peccadillos*. *How the Media Lies to America* becomes *Publishing Piranhas Broadcasting Blunders*.

A Few Rules of Thumb

1. Using the name of the assignment as your title may be the LEAST effective title for an essay. *Paper #3* or *Self Reflection Essay* just doesn't do much.
2. FIND a title that fits the subject or topic of your paper. *Myth of the Social Volcano, Detecting Foreign Bodies in Food, A Theory of Shopping, The Science of Love.*
3. CREATE a title that captures readers' attention. *The Odd Man* or *My Child* might be your best work, but the title won't capture attention. Better choices may be *Making a Moron, Waterproofing Your Child, Who Moved My Cheese?*, or *Daddy Was an Undertaker*.
4. CREATE a title that is easy to remember. Complicated or hard to pronounce titles might make it difficult for your reader to feel motivated to read your paper. *Murder on the Wzcylubjekistan Express* may be the best writing you've ever done, but your reader will stumble over it. While your paper or story may be complex, that doesn't mean that your

title should be. Try something catchy like *Across the Desert by Coyote, One Way Trip to the Cemetery, Saving Fish from Drowning, Be Bold with Bananas.*

The content of this handout was adapted with changes from the following sources:

Floyd, John. "Choosing the Right Name for Your Story." *Writing~World.com*, 2012, www.writing-world.com/fiction/titles.shtml.

Leahy, Richard. "Twenty Titles for the Writer." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1991, p. 517.

Additional titles created by Writing Center staff and excerpts from English 85 student assignments.

This handout was created by the Writing Centers at YVC.
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