



APSU Writing Center

Creating Titles

Guidelines for Creating a Title

- **What a title is:**
 - The title of an essay, research paper, informative paper, and most all other written material should adequately fit the body.

- For **creative writing** or **informal papers**, such as personal essays, journals, poems, and short stories, the title should be as interesting, definitive, descriptive, and/or as creative as possible without being “flowery” or difficult to understand.
 - **Examples:**
 - Edgar Allen Poe’s poem “The Raven.”
 - Our essay “The Baton.”
 - Children’s stories “Little Red Riding Hood,” “The Three Pigs,” and “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.”

- For **formal papers**, such as essay tests, informative essays, research papers, etc., the title should be definitive, informative, brief, and/or descriptive with little, if any, creativity. However, the titles should not be so bland as to be plain, nondescriptive, or boring.
 - **For example**, for a Euro History essay about Renaissance art in Italy and Northern Europe, instead of the title being the ordinary and plain “Renaissance Art,” the title should be more definitive and/or descriptive, such as “Renaissance Painters and Sculptors from Italy and Northern Europe.”

- In addition, for **professional, formal papers**, such as the technological, medical, and scientific fields, the title needs to be as definitive, but brief, as possible.
 - **Examples:**
 - “The Analysis of DNA Testing in Fetuses”
 - “The Religious Aspects of Stem Cell Research”
 - “The Advantages and Disadvantages of a Living Will”

- **What the title does (depending on the type of written work):**
 - defines or describes the paper’s body
 - captures the interest of the reader and entices the reader to want to read on
 - identifies, reiterates, or re-emphasizes the topic(s)



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- **What the title is not:**
 - flowery, silly, unprofessional, inappropriate
 - profane
 - boring or bland
 - unfitting with the paper's body
 - non-descriptive or non-definitive

- **How to create the title:**
 - The best way to establish a title is to have a general idea of what the title should be, based on the thesis, topic(s) to be discussed, and the direction of the paper, but wait until the paper is completely written to develop a polished title that best fits the paper's body.