

33 Titles

CHOOSING YOUR TITLES

Because the title of anything you write gives your reader the first idea of what he or she will find in your composition, you need to prepare titles carefully.

1. WRITING A FIRST-RATE TITLE: HOW TO INTEREST YOUR READER

- Effective titles are usually brief, often just a few words.
- Try to give in your title some idea of the subject the reader will find in the paragraph. (You do not have to mention the topic *exactly*.) It's often effective to pick out a word group directly from the words in the composition. The title "What's Wrong with the Name Ramon?" in Kit 6 comes right from the paragraph.
- Your title should make your reader want to read on. It should not be too general nor so closely related to only one part of the paragraph that it is hard to tell the main idea.
- Make the title suit the general tone of the paper. Humorous titles belong only with humorous themes.
- Try to make your title original and clear by expressing it in your own words. Don't worry about making up something very clever. And don't use expressions that are overused.
- It is usually best to write your title after the composition is completed. In that way you are sure to pick a title that is clearly related to the main idea of the paragraph. If you mention the topic of your paragraph in the title you still have to write a topic sentence which tells the topic more clearly and specifically.

2. THREE PRACTICAL HINTS ABOUT YOUR TITLES

- Put the title in the middle of the top line. Skip a line after it before you begin your first sentence.
- Use capitals for all major words in your title. Words like *a, an, the, and, but, for, or, to, in, over, by*, or other very short words such as these are capitalized only as first words in the title.
- Do not put your title in quotation marks. Do not underline your title.

EXERCISES

Some of the following titles violate the suggestions just given. On separate paper, rewrite any poor titles so that they are more effective. If a title is already effective, put a checkmark next to it in the margin.

1. How to Effectively and Clearly Write Good and Interesting Titles for Your Class Themes or Anything Else You May Be Writing.

2. How to Win at Poker
3. That's the Way the Cookie Crumbles
4. Life
5. "The Last Chance"

USING OTHER PEOPLE'S TITLES

Certain rules apply to the use of titles other than your own theme titles. Keep these rules in mind as you use them in your writing.

3. ITALICS AND QUOTES FOR TITLES

- Titles of books, plays, movies, magazines, newspapers, long musical works, and works of art as they appear in print are italicized: *Gone with the Wind, Manhattan, Time, The Wall Street Journal, Aida, The Last Supper*. When writing or typewriting these titles, you must underline them to indicate italics.
- Titles of short stories, poems, one-act plays, short musical works, articles from periodicals, titles of chapters within books are generally enclosed in quotation marks: "The Killers," "How Do I Love Thee?" "You're the Tops."
- As you have already learned, titles of your own compositions are written on the top line of your paper and need neither quotation marks nor underlining. However, if you mention the title of a book, poem, etc., in your own title be sure to use the appropriate underlining or quotation marks: How to Read *Huckleberry Finn*, In Praise of "Ode to the West Wind."

EXERCISES

A. Add underlining or quotation marks to the titles in the following sentences.

1. Although my sister reads the Des Moines Register, I prefer the New York Times.
2. I read the book The Wizard of Oz before I saw the play The Wiz.
3. Have you read the article entitled China's Incredible Find in National Geographic?
4. He asked the violinist to play You Stepped Out of a Dream for her.
5. The Tonight Show must be more than ten years old.

B. On separate paper, write a complete sentence that

1. mentions the name of your favorite television program
2. gives the name of your favorite song
3. names the title and first chapter of one of your textbooks
4. notes the name of your local newspaper
5. tells of a movie you recently saw