

Writing Handout 03 - Titles

Essays and articles have titles. The title serves two functions: it lets the reader know what the piece of writing is about, and it tries to make the reader want to read beyond the title. There are certain rules associated with the writing of titles. FOLLOW THE RULES CAREFULLY!

Rule #1: Capitalize a title properly. All the main words of a title are capitalized, including:

- the first word
- the last word
- the first word after a colon (:) indicating a subtitle
- the word after a hyphen in a compound word (ex: Merry-Go-Round)

Otherwise, do not capitalize:

- articles (a, an, the)
- prepositions (in, on, etc.)
- conjunctions (and, but, etc.)
- the “to” in an infinitive (ex: to go)

Rule #2: Make titles that neatly sum up the writing subject in just a few words. A title is often an entire sentence reduced to a single phrase (it is often a noun phrase).

For academic writing, it is a good idea to **not** make a title that is a question or a sentence (i.e., there should usually be no ending punctuation).

Rule #3: Make titles attractive. They must entice the reader to read more.

Remember: boring titles are bad titles!!!

Rule #4: Titles must be centered at the top of the page. They should be in a larger font than the rest of the paragraph. They should also be in boldface.

▲ **Practice 1** ▼

These titles are interesting. They work well as titles, but they are not written like titles. Fix them. Use the rules above. (Also, notice how short but direct the titles are!)

(1) romance's beneficial blindness

(2) a precaution about old proverbs

(3) the lowdown on high heels

(4) a disappointing encounter with the new neighbor

▲ **Practice 2** ▼

What would be some good titles for paragraphs for the following topics?

(1) A paragraph that describes the danger of drinking and driving

(2) A paragraph about one of the best places to do grocery shopping in your home town

(3) A paragraph that describes how useful computers have become for university students

(4) A paragraph about a pair of pandas at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C.

▲ Practice 3 ▼

For each paragraph, decide a title and write it correctly on the line above the paragraph. These are just *practice paragraphs*. They do not look exactly the paragraphs you will learn to write.

Paragraph 1

The tulip is a popular flower in gardens all around the world. Though Holland is now famous for its tulips, the flowers originally came from Turkey. They were brought to Holland in the seventeenth century and immediately became very fashionable. The Dutch merchants who imported them became very wealthy because they sold the tulips to the Dutch at very high prices.

Paragraph 2

Exercising at home may be good for your health, but it may not be good for your children. Each year, about 25,000 children are hurt by exercise equipment. The exercise bicycle is the most common cause of injury. Many children have lost a finger or toe in the wheels of these bicycles. Therefore, if you have an exercise bicycle, you should not let your children play with it.

Paragraph 3

The one-cent coin in the United States has a picture of Abraham Lincoln on it. Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States, was one of the country's greatest presidents. He came from a poor family, and as a young man, he had to work very hard. This was the reason why the government decided to put Lincoln's picture on the smallest coin. It would remind everyone in America that someone from a poor family could become president.

Paragraph 4

The Chinese were the first people to make books. They discovered how to make paper and how to print books in about 1200 A.D. At that time, there was almost no contact between Europe and China. One of the few Europeans to travel that far east was Marco Polo, an Italian. He visited China in the thirteenth century and may have seen some books. However, he did not bring the idea of making books back home with him. Europeans, in fact, did not start making books until much later.

Paragraph 5

A bird feeder can provide you with an interesting new hobby – bird watching. Winter is the best time for this hobby because that is when the birds have trouble finding food. If you put the feeder near a window, you can watch them feed from inside your home. However, once you start feeding the birds, you should continue until spring. If you stop in the middle of winter, the birds may die of hunger.

Paragraph 6

Monkeys are smart animals, but their intelligence can be surprising and entertaining. A psychologist once wanted to see just how smart a monkey was. He hung a banana high up in a monkey's cage and placed several large boxes and a stick nearby. He wanted to see if the monkey could use the boxes and the stick to get the banana. The monkey looked at the banana, the boxes, and the stick. The monkey then took the psychologist's hand and led him to where the banana was hanging. It then jumped up onto his shoulders and reached the banana from there.

Paragraph 7

Many people are afraid to go to the dentist. One reason is that the patient cannot see what the dentist is doing. Another reason is that the patient, who is lying back, may feel very helpless. People also may be influenced by the general belief that dentists cause pain and are therefore scary. Finally, many people are afraid of the dentist's instruments.

Paragraph 8

One of the most important principles of biology is that all living things must come from other living things. This principle was not discovered until the eighteenth century. Before that, people believed that life could come from nonliving matter. For example, they thought that worms could come from meat. However, an Italian scientist named Francesco Redi tried an experiment. He covered some meat with a cloth so that flies could not land on it. When no worms grew on the meat, he knew that the worms really came from fly eggs.

Paragraph 9

An albino is an animal (or a person) that is born without any color. Albinos have pale, whitish fur, feathers, or hair, and pink skin and eyes. Albinos are very rare in nature because they usually do not live very long. One reason for this is that they often become blind and cannot care for themselves. Another reason is simply the color. In most regions, a white animal is easily seen and caught by larger animals.