8.11: Creating and Refining a Title

Most people create a title when they are done writing. The title of your paper frames what your paper is about and captures your reader’s attention. Creating a good title is important because it is the first thing your reader sees. Your title conveys your tone to your audience. A good title is clear, concise, informative, and inviting.

Choose a title based on your purpose and your audience. A title often has two parts, separated by a colon – the most important part should come first. If you are creating a title for a scientific audience, the first part might focus on your topic and the second part might focus on your methods, e.g., “Nurses’ Experiences of Grief: A Literature Synthesis.” Alternatively, if you want to use a creative or clever hook to pique your reader’s curiosity, you might call your paper “Nine Hundred Ninety-Nine Patients: The Crisis of the Country’s Wait List for Surgery.”

You may have chosen a title before you started writing, but you should refine it in the final stages of writing. Make sure it says what you need it to say. Show it to a peer and ask them what they would expect the paper to be about and whether it sounds interesting.

Some strategies to consider when creating a title:

• Avoid abbreviations.
• Limit it to 10 to 15 words.
• Choose words purposefully.
• Avoid unnecessary words (bolded in these sentences) such as “Exploring Nurses’ Experiences of Grief” or “Examining the Crisis of the Country’s Wait List for Surgery.”

Student Tip

Creating a Title
Re-read your introduction: your main points may help you develop a title.