



## **Writing and Study Skills Services – Laurier Brantford First Impressions Count: Creating an Effective Essay Title**

Having a good essay title is useful in providing the reader with key information on the essay, and helps to set the tone for the rest of your paper.

- The writer should create something that will appeal to the audience specifically, grabbing hold of the reader immediately and drawing him or her into your essay.
- However, it needs to be concise; having a title that is too wordy or lengthy can actually lose the attention of the potential reader.

### Recommended Formatting

Ideally, an undergraduate essay title can be formatted as follows:

General Idea/Hook Title: More Specific Information Relevant to your Thesis/Main Point(s)

For example, if the subject of an essay was about privacy rights in the United States, then a title like this could be used:

The Land of the Not-so-Free: How America is Becoming a Surveillance State.

The hook should be included in the first half of the title; this should grab the attention of the audience. For this essay topic, the hook is a spin-off of the American national anthem, which is a well-known and meaningful reference. The second half of the title briefly describes to the audience what position is being argued on the subject matter.

### Tips

- Always capitalize major words in a title. Do not capitalize articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet), or prepositions (to, in, of, with) *unless* it is the first word of the title.
  - Example: The Important Words in a Title
- ‘In’ and ‘a’ are left in the lower case because ‘a’ is an article, and ‘in’ is a preposition.
- Although ‘The’ is an article, it is capitalized because it is the first word in the title.
- Write the title (or, at least revise it) *after* you’ve finished writing the essay. Chances are that it will need to be reworked by the time you finish writing your paper.

## Examples

Here are some examples taken from CliffsNotes (2013) on how to change a broad, bland title into a more specific and interesting one:

<b>Beginner Title</b>	<b>Advanced Title</b>
Macbeth's Conscience	“Sleep No More”: The Role of Macbeth's Conscience
Emily Dickinson and her Poetry	“I'm Nobody”: Finding Emily Dickinson in her Poetry
Beauty and Women Today	Only Skin Deep? The Importance of Beauty to the Contemporary Woman
Judging Legal Sanity	Fit to be Tried: An Examination of the McNaughton Rule
Airport Security Measures	Gaining Safety or Losing Freedom: The Debate over Airport Security Measures

### Works Cited & Consulted:

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago, 2008. Print.

"Titles." *Cliffsnotes.com*. CliffsNotes. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013. Web. 07 Nov. 2013.