

Writer's Block Workshop Series

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IF THE TITLE FITS-WEAR IT HOW TO CREATE CAPTIVATING TITLES

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What makes you pick up that next book to read? Is it the cover or something else that draws you in? Though our eyes are enticed by images that enrapture us, what about the title that makes a reader want to pick up that next book?

This article focuses on key elements of not only creating a functioning title, but one that provides a meaningful and attractive perspective. This will draw readers in for the literary experience you are about to tell.

FUNCTIONS OF A TITLE

Before we begin utilizing snazzy and colorful buzzwords to create a fetching title, let's discuss the basic functions of a title.

A title should:

- 1.) Give a sense of purpose and understanding to what the reader is about to engage in.
- 2.) Provide a summary of an embodiment of work.
- 3.) Intrigue and pique the reader's interest or create a sense of curiosity.
- 4.) Be unique, thorough, and stand out.
- 5.) Preferably be as short as possible to provide a memorable distinction compared with other literary works within the same genre.



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER BEFORE CRAFTING YOUR TITLE

Before you type a larger font of words to plaster on the front of your next manuscript, consider the following points.

- 1.) **Search engines**- Note when your book is ready for sale, a potential reader may start with a search engine to locate their next page-turner. Titles that are short such as one or two words will yield many search results unless an author name is included. This may make it more difficult to find your book.
- 2.) **Email spam**-When I worked in email marketing I had to come up with titles for newsletters. The one thing I noticed over time is long titles, buzzwords, or other jargon could potentially end up in spam, thus making it difficult to reach your intended audience. Though this is only one factor to consider in the title creation process, marketing is the final step before getting your book in the hands of readers.
- 3.) **Existing titles**-Do a quick search to see if the title is in existence, particularly in the same genre.
- 4.) **Language**-Avoid utilizing complex language that may potentially deter readers or titles that could potentially be offensive to your audience.

BRAINSTORMING AN EFFECTIVE TITLE



For some authors, there are what I call "magic moments." This is when the words seem to come easily to create a clever title. However, this is not always the case and that is okay! This perhaps helps explain why some authors leave their work untitled.

If you are drawing a blank, I suggest at least starting with a working title. There are a few advantages to doing this:

- 1.) The title keeps your focus as you continue to write your project.
- 2.) This sets a baseline and/or tone for additional titles to be constructed as you continue to write.

After you complete your work, determine if the title holds true to your original intent or if it has changed. Think of your title as if you were trying on a pair of shoes. They either fit or don't. It's only until you try them on, you realize you have a snug pair.

A RECIPE FOR A GREAT TITLE STARTS WITH A PINCH OF...

I'm sure you wanted to fill in the blank with sugar, chocolate, or some sprinkles. If only title creation were that easy!

As an author you already know writing is a very fluid process and thus is title design development. Though there is no special recipe for title development, I offer you some key tips:

- 1.) **Draw inspiration from the main theme of the story.** If you had five seconds to explain what your creative work is about, what words come to mind? Ask yourself: What key points do you want to deliver to your reader?
- 2.) **Try constructing a series of titles in various lengths.** First start with a sentence as a pitch to explain what your work is about. Next, refine the title in fewer words. Avoid words that lack meaning or substance to explain what your work is about. We'll discuss in further detail with a methodology I call the Siphon Approach on page four.
- 3.) **Replace commonly used words with interesting words and adjectives.** The more precise you can be with nouns, adjectives, and verbs offers a little more depth and flavor to your title. Utilize a thesaurus to locate similar words. Continue to replace and swap words until you find something that strikes your interest.
- 4.) **Consider words that have a shocking element of surprise** without giving away your entire creation. Words that carry an element of an emotional factor can capture a reader's attention by evoking a certain mood or feeling.
- 5.) **Research other authors in the same genre.** Are they short, long, or descriptive? After all, this is who you are competing with.
- 6.) **Read your title aloud.** That's right! How does it sound-suspenseful, boring, interesting, or sad? Think of the feeling it evokes in you and what you want to communicate. Is this what you want readers to feel or experience as well?
- 7.) **Ensure relevance of the title to the body of work.** Readers should feel they are on the same page with you from the start. Try not to drift too far from the theme of your book.
- 8.) **Bounce ideas off others.** Share your title ideas with friends and family to get a consensus.
- 9.) **Explore your character list and specifics of your story.** Does your story support a character bold enough to stand on its own? Is there a striking element of location or season that captures the main theme/hook of your story?



LET'S TRY AN EXAMPLE

Let's put our recipe ideas into practical application with a hypothetical example utilizing a methodology I like to call the Siphon Approach.

SIPHON APPROACH

The Siphon Approach is a continual refining process of words. The goal is to take the bulk or purest form of idea by shaving unnecessary words and phrases until you have a strong main idea. Start with a summary of your story. This will prepare you to pull key words to generate a title.

Let's take the example below. We'll start with a long description and then apply the Siphon Approach to omit words that provide little to no value.

Original Story Summary:

Janet Roberts always had a dream to win gold. From the time her training wheels came off her ten-speed bicycle, she knew road racing was her dream. After several attempts riding the grueling twenty-two kilometer race, Janet suffered various injuries. Nearly finding herself wanting to quit bicycle road racing, she knew she was going to have to work hard to train for the epic race of her life. Struggling through injuries and a lack of confidence, the fifteen-year-old finally wins gold, even with the odds against her.

Siphon Approach:

Fifteen-year-old Janet Roberts always had a dream to win gold in bicycle road racing. Suffering various injuries, she finds renewed strength, courage, and an erudite of valor to pedal for the epic race of her life.

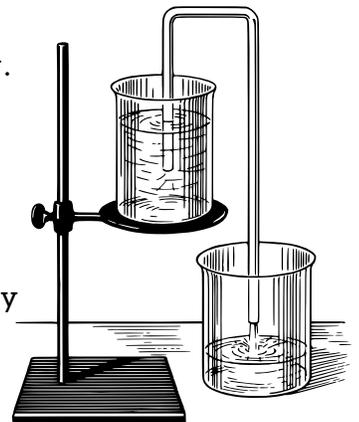
In the Siphon Approach, words that do not add value to the main point of the story are removed. In this case, the important facets are: the character, the subject of bicycle road racing, determination, and winning gold.

Now let's apply the same concept to the title development for this story.

Title Ideas:

Spinning to Victory
Spinning for Success
Golden Wheels
Pedaling for Gold

Spokes of Glory
The Golden Trail: 22 Kilometers to Victory
Two Wheels to Gold
Pedal of Medal: Winning Gold
The Road Race of Brutality



FINAL PUNCTUATION

Titles are a fun way of placing the final stamp on an arduous and laborious project. There are no right or wrong answers to developing your next title. The creative process is fluid and subjective. The idea is to have fun, so try multiple ideas on for size. Remember, the title is what makes you want to select your next book, so make it memorable and something you will be proud of.

Enjoy brainstorming your next title. And remember if the title fits-wear it.

Check out the [Writer's Block Writing Workshop Series](#) as well as Authors' Notes for additional writing workshops and resources dedicated exclusively for first-time authors.

Author On.

Writer's Block Workshop Series



Authors' Notes

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