Tired of naming your papers after the assignment? Wishing you could come up with titles as clever and memorable as the ones you see in a magazine or online? Review this handout to learn the conventional strategies that professional writers use to make their titles stand out from the crowd.

* This handout is adapted from the article “A Rhetoric of Titles: 18 Forms for Student Writers,” by Anne-Marie Womack

**Crafting Effective Titles: Eight Examples**

Effective titles offer a highly compressed preview of an academic paper. They also spark interest, indicating that the author will be good company in the following pages.

By contrast, ineffective titles simply announce the topic of the paper or communicate in a cryptic, confusing manner. If you name your paper after the assignment or the material you’re discussing, then you indicate a lack of interest in the project at hand. Alternatively, if you give your paper a mysterious title, you indicate that you do not have full control over your subject matter.

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| **Effective titles are**  **concise.** | **Effective titles are informative.** | **Effective titles are stylish or catchy.** |

**Conventional Strategies for Titles**

1. *Incorporate an appropriate quotation from the text you analyze.*

“She is a Creature Designed for Reading”: Narrative Intimacy in Young Adult Fiction

“Digital Narcissism is a Narcotic”: A Keen Analysis of the Dangers of Facebook

2. *Play on a term that has multiple meanings.*

No-Man’s-Land: Gender and Violence in Tim O’Brien’s “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong”

Telling it *Straight*: Christianity and Fallacy in James Dobson’s Critique of Same Sex Marriage

3. *Use parallel structure.*

Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare’s Plays

Destroying Discourse and Constructing Masculinity in the *Arcipreste de Talavera*

4. *Describe dramatic but appropriate imagery.*

Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination

(over)

5. *Use a related cliché or commonly recognized phrase in its original form or in a variation.*

Make *Love*, Not Warcraft: Virtual Worlds and Utopia

The Renaissance: (Paradigm) Shift Happens

6. *Craft a probing question that describes the debate.*

Is Nick an Unreliable Narrator?: Narrative Voice in *The Great Gatsby*

What Should Colleges Teach?

7. *Repeat terms.*

Confronting Class in the Classroom

Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course

8. *Incorporate a fitting allusion (e.g. songs, fables, literature).*

Children of the Corn: America’s Favorite Cash Crop and Where To Find It (Hint: Everywhere)

“We Don’t Need No Education”: Moore’s Critique of American Politics in “Idiot Nation”