

HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVE TITLES FOR ARTICLES

Bezyazykova E.A.

Scientific supervisor - Associate professor Alekseenko I.V.

Siberian Federal University

Before you can capture readers with your words and voice, you must write an effective title! Whether you're writing magazine articles, blog posts, school essays, or a book – your best title makes readers drool with anticipation.

“Why is writing a title so difficult? It could be the pressure to hook your reader before the article has even begun; or it could be the fact that condensing an article with hundreds of words into just one snappy phrase is impossible!”

Remember your audience. If you're trying to write a great title for a blog post, your process is going to be quite different from penning one for a newspaper. Keep the people who are likely to read your piece in mind, and consider what they want to hear. Newspaper readers might be skimming the whole paper, so they want clear, concise information. Tabloid readers want something inflammatory so that they're tempted to read the article immediately.

Get even more specific. The title was meant to incite controversy and invite debate, and it certainly motivated people to read the piece and talk about it!

Don't use your first idea as your title. This is one of those rules that can sometimes be broken—after all, your first idea has the potential to be your best—but usually shouldn't be. Just as you can almost always improve a sentence, you can almost always improve a title. When you have something in mind, try adding or subtracting words, swapping in synonyms, or completely rephrasing the whole thing. If you have a lot of time, grab people around you, provide them with several choices, and poll them about which title seems most interesting to them.

When you resist the urge to quickly dash something off, you greatly increase the odds that your title will be effective.

Consider the magazine article, blog post, or story. Now that you're nearing the end of this piece, would you agree that “How to Write Effective Article Titles” is a fitting headline? It might be a tad boring, but it gets the point across and communicates what the reader can expect. When you're writing your own leads, it's great to be clever and funny (humor is always welcome!), but your main priority should be coming up with a title that fits the story. The title should go along with the piece in tone as well as in content. If someone else wrote your headline and it's anything other than straightforward, the style inconsistency is likely to pop out at the reader.

Keep the whole picture in mind, and think of your article as a meal. The content is the main course and the closing line is the dessert, but your title is an enticing appetizer that should never be overlooked.

Choosing titles that will get people's attention is an art that can be learned. You will want to have keyword rich titles that include both features and benefits. Figure out what and who you are writing about and then decide what is in it for them. If you only talk about features - “7 Tips for Writing Articles Quickly...” people may not care. But when you include the benefit - “...So That You Can Develop Them Into Ebooks”, then you have your reader's attention. Make a list of your keywords and then make two lists - one for features and one for benefits. Combine these and you will have titles that are search engine friendly and enticing.

If your article is titled poorly, the editor may pass on your article without ever reading a word of the body.

Not only, however, must your article title pique the editor's interest, but it must also be a reliable harbinger of what's to come in your article. If the editor reads your title and finds

himself interested, then scans the article to find that it doesn't contain what the title promises, you're in hot water.

Editors and readers alike build expectations based on the title of an article. If it doesn't deliver what it promises, then you've abused the trust of both editor and reader. A title should always encapsulate the point of your article while beckoning the reader to continue further.

Choose the Type of Article Title:

The type of title you choose for your article will depend on the function of the article itself. Are you explaining something? Calling your reader to action? Giving a list? Following are three different types of titles you might choose to use with your article, along with an explanation for the titles' functions.

How-To: A how-to article title alerts the reader that he or she will see steps or strategies for accomplishing a goal, such as "How to Wash Your Car" or "How to Mow the Lawn". The how-to article is usually constructed with a list of titled subheads, which walk the reader through the process of whatever you're teaching him or her to do.

Top [Ten] List: Numbered list article titles have always been popular because you can break down one subject into several different subsets. A numbered list could be comprised of products, methods or other items which benefit the reader in some way.

Why-You-Should: The why-you-should article title indicates an article in which the author will explain why the reader should do something. From completing your taxes two months early to skiing in Colorado, there are plenty of options for Why-You-Should articles.

After you've chosen the type of title you want to use, you must make sure that it fits the article itself.

A Top-Ten-List title should be followed by an article that lists ten items or steps in order; if it doesn't, then you've failed the reader and the editor of your article. Sometimes it helps to choose six or seven different article titles and then to narrow them down after reading your article over once or twice. Which title encapsulates the overall focus of the article? Which title will draw the attention of an editor or reader more efficiently?

Inserting Keywords Into Your Article:

If you're writing your article for the Internet, keywords will be a main focus of your title. The title must include the main keyword or keyword phrase that you'll be using in your article, but it shouldn't include more than two keywords. If you're trying to focus your article on several keywords, you might be better off writing more than one article.

Know the Dangers of the 'Working Title':

Many writers choose not to worry about their title because it's considered a 'Working Title'. This was more common before the Internet, but in some cases, an editor will change the title of an article to better suit the article itself or the publication.

You shouldn't count on that, however, because your title needs to grab the editor's attention as well. Try not to put off coming up with a title just because the editor might change it.

-Determine your intended audience. Who are you writing for? Your article title needs to immediately capture the interest of your intended audience and motivate them to read further.

-Decide the purpose of your article. Are you trying to convince your audience to do something, buy something or read something? Consider the purpose when crafting your title.

-Determine the main idea of your article. Use a shortened version of the main idea in the title of your article.

-Craft an article title that offers readers a glimpse of the content with their first glance. Aim for simple, straight-forward language in the article title but don't be afraid to also try a catchy phrase or wordplay.