

EFFECTIVE TITLES

Source: <http://cstudies.ubc.ca/writers-workshop/writers-toolbox/index.html>

The most overlooked element of academic writing is that it should **engage the reader's interest** (especially in the term paper context)--you must go beyond simply transmitting information, an analysis, or an argument to your academic audience--you must achieve your writing objective in an interesting way.

How will your essay on *Hamlet* stand out from 40 other essays on Shakespeare's play? How will your essay on Canada's role in the Second World War stand out from the essays written by your classmates?

How will your assessment report on the downturn of the Asian economy impress your reader?

HOW DO YOU GRAB THE READER'S ATTENTION EARLY?

Ask yourself what the **first point of contact** is with the reader? The answer is **your title**.

In order for your title to be effective, it should satisfy one or more of the following:

- Is your title original?
- Is your title informative?
- Is your title engaging?
- Does your title reveal your attitude towards the subject?

Try to go beyond simply rewording or over-simplifying the topic question when trying to be engaging and original.

Some suggestions:

- Excerpt a particularly memorable word, phrase, or sentence from your text.
- Employ a controversial or thought-provoking question.
- Use hyperbole (exaggeration) or understatement to grab the reader's attention.
- Use a famous or infamous quote.

Below are several examples of essay topic questions that have been used in English 112 (Strategies for University Writing) at UBC. Following each example are representative samples of student titles that were used in response to the questions. Read each of the samples and decide whether or not you think the titles are engaging.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT 1:

Several fields of science have been embroiled in controversy in the 20th Century (e.g. organ transplants, DNA blueprinting, genetic engineering, nuclear energy etc.). Focusing on one area of scientific research, argue whether or not scientists should continue exploring this field into the 21st Century. Assume that you are writing this essay for *Maclean's* magazine.

Student Sample #1:

"The Hazards of Nuclear Power"

Student Sample #2:

"Human Cloning"

Student Sample #3:

"Organ Transplants Are Something We Should Not Do"

Student Sample #4:

"Double Trouble: How Cloning Multiplies Our Problems"

Student Sample #5:

"Nuclear Winter: Can Spring, Summer, and Fall be Far Behind?"

Student Sample #7:

"The Dangerous Implications of Genetic Screening"

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT 2:

In recent years, there has been controversy surrounding the advertisement of products which are deemed to promote unhealthy or even reckless behaviour, especially in young adults. Imagine that you are a marketing manager at Molson Canada, a major beer manufacturing company, and that your summer advertising campaign is just around the corner. Write a letter to the editorial page of the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper in which you defend the right to advertise your product.

Student Sample #1:

"Beer Advertising Is Good"

Student Sample #2:

"Attacking Beer ads: Don't Shoot the Messenger!"

Student Sample #3:

"Free Speech"

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT 3:

Argue for or against the use of North American Native names and references for amateur and professional sports teams (examples: Atlanta Braves, Washington Redskins).

Student Sample #1:

"Native Names and Owners' Rights: Why Sports Teams Should Use Any Names They Want"

Student Sample #2:

"Power Issues: How Pro Sports Have Sacked Native Peoples"

Student Sample #3:

"Native Names in Sports"