Jade Brown: Independent Project

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Independent Project: Writing Titles - A Checklist & Strategies

Submission Due: End of Week 14

Motivation for Having Guidelines on Writing Titles:

In the OPIE Pre-academic-Advanced section many students were honing their skills, both general and technical, in writing essays and research papers. However, some were struggling to write a fitting title or lacked one entirely. Having the knowledge and capacity to write an appropriate title may lead to the enhancement of other writing skills that students are continuing to acquire such as selecting and appealing to a target audience, developing a hook, summarizing main points, and analyzing key terms; word choice may also improve as the student learns to draw from their ideas and select accurate synonyms. Based on the Writing Lab sessions, it was observed that students who wrote effective titles often were able to communicate their ideas and more efficiently convert them into the form or structure of the paper, be it their introductory paragraph, thesis statement, body paragraphs, etc. In addition, they spent less time outlining their drafts. And, while about half of these outlines were still good or of a similar quality, some were more detail-oriented. Being detail-oriented is a beneficial attribute for a student to have as they progress in their writing style and build their skillset. Thus, when considering the other areas of writing that are comparable to writing a title and the fact that growth in those areas also may correlate with improvement in a learner’s skill or level of proficiency, writing titles is quite a significant task in the writing process. Compiling a guide, a checklist of some basic writing principles, and some suggestions to get students thinking about their titles and how they might revise them seemed all the more practical.

**Writing Titles: A Checklist & Strategies**

Checklist:

* Does your title correspond with the content or information in your paper?
* Is it suitable for your type of paper? [informative, formal, argumentative, research, etc.]
* Is it appealing? Does it catch the reader’s eye?
* Does your title use descriptive words that evoke an image that the reader can visualize?
* Are the main ideas of your thesis reflected?
* If so, can those ideas be narrowed down to a few words? [Is it brief, but clearly defined?]
* Are you using new words? Avoid repeating too many of the same words from your paper.
* Is punctuation used correctly? [e.g. commas for more than one subject, semicolon for eliciting more information] Try not to use slashes [/] or dashes [-].
* Is the space on the page used accordingly? [Does the title take up enough space?]
* Say your title aloud. Do the sounds produced sound clear and commonplace? Might you hear this title elsewhere, like in media/entertainment, a book, or from another person? If the title is difficult to say, and sounds strained or unnatural, consider revising it.

Tips:

* Remember, just like with writing a paper, titles may go through several revisions. It is common for people to struggle with writing a title in the preliminary draft stages. If you’re not satisfied with your current title, reflect on the meaning that you wish to convey. Then, try writing it again during or after your paper’s final draft.
* On Structure: Titles should be aligned in the center of the paper. Also note that prepositions [for, in, on, by, etc.] and articles [the, a/an] are typically not capitalized unless they are the first word in the title.
* Try altering the form of a title. What might be fitting in one construction may not be in another. Titles can be questions. Example: “Who Wins and Loses in the War on Terrorism?” Titles can also be abridged statements. Example: “Solving the Mystery of Alzheimer’s Disease”
* Also, if you’re writing an essay about a group, place, event, person, and/or their achievements, you might add in words to describe their features, skills, or contributions. For example, consider writing a paper about Thomas Edison. Instead of writing “Thomas Edison” as a title, you could write “Thomas Edison: The Writer, Thinker, and Innovator”.