A title is an essential aspect of any piece of writing, whether you are writing for a composition class, a neuroscience class, or a fiction workshop. However, the title is probably the most forgotten piece of the writing process. Here are some hints to help you create an engaging label for your work, something that will both inform and appeal to your audience.

**What’s in a Name?**

**Be creative!** Don’t just use the author’s name and the title of the work—boring! Don’t name the paper after the assignment. Find interesting quotes, surprise your reader with an unsuspected tone, use a pun or joke, make an analogy or metaphor, switch the expected meaning of words, utilize a cultural phrase in a new way. The title should make the reader want to go further:

- A Rose for Who?
- The Art of the
- Blazing Saddles

**Be informative.** The title should give the reader a clear idea of your subject, your position, and your main ideas. Don’t take on the world with a sweeping generalization (“Man’s Place in Nature”—be specific:

- A Rose for Who?: Characterization in Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily”
- Blazing Saddles: Rethinking the History of the American West
- When Black and White Made Gold: The Golden Age of Film Noir

**Title as invention:** Sometimes creating a title for an essay you have not yet written or for which you have only done the research can clearly focus your ideas in an interesting way.

**Title as summary:** Sometimes the title only comes when you have fully completed your writing and understand the conclusion you have reached. Look back through your paragraphs to find an interesting phrase that sums up the main ideas of your essay.

**Mechanical Issues**

- Remember that italicizing and underlining serve the same function.
- Do not underline or quote your whole title.
- Underline or quote the works you are using, though (books, poems, movies, scientific research, etc.), just like in the body of your essay.
- Use a colon to join the creative and informative aspects of your title—see examples above.