



Description

When you are searching for a research study on a particular topic, you probably notice that articles with interesting, descriptive research titles draw you in. By contrast, [research paper](#) titles that are not descriptive are usually passed over, even though you may [write a good research paper](#) with interesting contents. This shows the importance of coming up with a good title for your research paper when drafting your own manuscript.

Importance of a Research Title

The research title plays a crucial role in the research process, and its importance can be summarized as follows:

Importance of a Research Title



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Therefore, a research title serves as a critical component of the overall research communication process. It not only facilitates the dissemination of knowledge but also contributes to the professionalism, and impact of the research.

Why do Research Titles Matter?

Before we look at how to title a research paper, let's look at a research title example that illustrates why a good research paper should have a strong title.

Imagine that you are researching meditation and nursing, and you want to find out if any studies have shown that meditation makes nurses better communicators. You conduct a keyword search using the

keywords “nursing”, “communication”, and “meditation.” You come up with results that have the following titles:

1. Benefits of Meditation for the Nursing Profession: A Quantitative Investigation
2. Why Mindful Nurses Make the Best Communicators
3. Meditation Gurus
4. Nurses on the Move: A Quantitative Report on How Meditation Can Improve Nurse Performance

All four of these research paper titles may describe very similar studies—they could even be titles for the same study! As you can see, they give very different impressions.

- Title 1 describes the topic and the method of the study but is not particularly catchy.
- Title 2 partly describes the topic, but does not give any information about the method of the study—it could simply be a theoretical or opinion piece.
- Title 3 is somewhat catchier but gives almost no information at all about the article.
- Title 4 begins with a catchy main title and is followed by a subtitle that gives information about the content and method of the study.

As we will see, Title 4 has all the characteristics of a good research title.

Characteristics of a Good Research Title

According to rhetoric scholars Hairston and Keene, making a good title for a paper involves ensuring that the title of the research accomplishes four goals as mentioned below:

1. It should **predict the content of the research paper**.
2. It should be **interesting to the reader**.
3. It should **reflect the tone of the writing**.
4. It should **contain important keywords** that will make it easier to be located during a keyword search.

Let’s return to the examples in the previous section to see how to make a research title.

Title	Predicts content?	Interesting?	Reflects tone?
<i>Benefits of Meditation for the Nursing Profession: A Quantitative Investigation</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>Why Mindful Nurses Make the Best Communicators</i>	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Meditation Gurus</i>	No	Yes	No

<p><i>Nurses on the Move: A Quantitative Report on How Meditation Can Improve Nurse Performance</i></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>
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As you can see in the table above, only one of the four example titles fulfills all of the criteria of a suitable research paper title.

Related: You've chosen your study topic, but having trouble deciding where to publish it? [Here's a comprehensive course to help you identify the right journal.](#)

Tips for Writing an Effective Research Paper Title

When writing a research title, you can use the four criteria listed above as a guide. Here are a few other tips you can use to make sure your title will be part of the recipe for an [effective research paper](#):

1. Make sure your research title describes (a) the topic, (b) the method, (c) the sample, and (d) the results of your study. You can use the following formula:

[Result]: A [method] study of [topic] among [sample]

Example: Meditation makes nurses perform better: a qualitative study of mindfulness meditation among German nursing students

2. Avoid unnecessary words and jargons. Keep the title statement as concise as possible. You want a title that will be comprehensible even to people who are not experts in your field. Check our article for a detailed list of [things to avoid when writing an effective research title](#).
3. Make sure your title is between 5 and 15 words in length.
4. If you are writing a title for a university assignment or for a particular academic journal, verify that your title conforms to the standards and requirements for that outlet. For example, many journals require that titles fall under a character limit, including spaces. Many universities require that titles take a very specific form, limiting your creativity.
5. Use a descriptive phrase to convey the purpose of your research efficiently.
6. Most importantly, use critical keywords in the title to [increase the discoverability of your article](#).

**WANT TO INCREASE THE IMPACT OF YOUR MANUSCRIPT TITLE?
FOLLOW THESE TIPS NOW!**

- 1** Ensure that the title is clear, interesting, and attracts the reader's attention. Prefer using declarative titles.
- 2** The title should be around 10–15 words. Highlight key aspects of the study using keywords. Shorter titles increase citations.
- 3** Avoid unnecessary words and technical jargons. Make sure the title conforms to journal guidelines and is formatted properly.

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Resources for Further Reading

In addition to the tips above, there are many resources online that you can use to help write your research title. Here is a list of links that you may find useful as you work on creating an excellent research title:

1. The University of Southern California has a guide specific to social science research papers: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/title>
2. The *Journal of European Psychology Students* has a blog article focusing on APA-compliant research paper titles: <http://blog.efpsa.org/2012/09/01/how-to-write-a-good-title-for-journal-articles/>
3. This article by Kristen Hamlin contains a step-by-step approach to writing titles: <http://classroom.synonym.com/choose-title-research-paper-4332.html>

Are there any tips or tricks you find useful in crafting research titles? Which tip did you find most useful in this article? Leave a comment to let us know!

References

1. Hairston, M., & Keene, M. 2003. *Successful writing*. 5th ed. New York: Norton.
2. University of Southern California. 2017. *Organizing your social sciences research paper: choosing a title*. [Online] Available at: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/title>

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1. Manuscripts & Grants

2. Reporting Research

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