

# Your essential 'how-to' guide to choosing article titles

[blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/06/21/your-essential-%e2%80%99how-to%e2%80%99-guide-to-choosing-article-titles/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/06/21/your-essential-%e2%80%99how-to%e2%80%99-guide-to-choosing-article-titles/)

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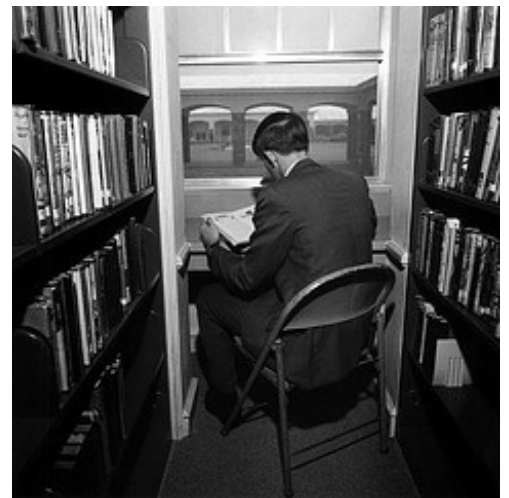
*One of the key tasks for an article author who wants to be cited is to quickly persuade people to click on the title of their piece and learn more from the abstract or book outline, and then from there to persuade them to download the whole article. Here we present a simple 'how-to' guide to choosing article titles.*

At each stage there will be an 'attrition' loss of people searching through:

- not finding the title of the piece in their searches at all;
- not recognizing the title of a piece as relevant for their needs;
- not clicking through from the title to learn more from the abstract or book outline;
- not recognizing from the abstract or book outline that the piece is relevant for their needs.

Even when a piece is found and downloaded or read in full, the next stage involves the reading academic in deciding to cite the piece or not. Often this decision may be a completely separate one, made perhaps weeks or months (or even years) after the person involved first read the piece. So here the key determinants of whether an article or book is now cited are usually:

- whether the potential citer remembers the existence of the piece or not;
- how much the person remembers of the key 'take-away' points that they found valuable in the piece when they first read it, which may often be its 'bottom-line' conclusions, or alternatively only one or two specific points or pieces of data within the text;
- whether they can find the piece again easily on their often voluminous PDF library on their PC or on their crowded book shelves;
- whether they can quickly re-access the argument or details of the piece so as to accurately cite or characterize it when citing.



Many academics do things that effectively ensure that the title of their work makes it hard to find initially in literature reviews and very hard to cite later on. It is therefore useful to consider here some specific examples of social science article titles and what can go wrong with the, shown the below.

<b>Is your title:</b>	<b>Example (and comment)</b>
A full 'narrative title' that clearly summarizes the substance of what the article argues or what has been found out? (Very good)	'New public management is dead: Long live digital era governance' - <i>the whole argument of the paper in 10 words</i>
An ambiguous title but with at least some narrative or substantive hints about your line of argument or findings? (OK)	'Modernist art: the gay dimension' - <i>probably highlights themes about homosexuality, but might deny them instead</i>

**Is your title:****Example (and comment)**

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A title that perhaps contains some cues as to the authors argument, but where youd need to read the piece first to understand these hints? (Poor)

'One for All: the logic of group conflict' - *actually this is a book title about solidarity pressures in ethnic groups, (and not Alexander Dumas' 'The Three Musketeers' which it apparently references)*

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An overly general title that could lead to multiple conclusions or lines of argument? (Poor).

'The Economic Institutions of Capitalism' - *probably related to organizational /institutional aspects of economics*

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