

## The Title: Your Last Chance to Make a First Impression

The title occupies an important place in the scientific research article as it provides the primary means for readers to locate an article and evaluate its relevance to their needs. Therefore, according to the Uniform Requirements, the title should accurately and concisely reflect the contents of the article. Titles of biomedical articles commonly take one of four forms (2). These four forms have been characterized as:

- i. Nominal
- ii. Compound
- iii. Full sentence
- iv. Question

A nominal title is a short phrase which encapsulates the theme of the article. This is the most common form of title used in biomedical papers. Examples are:

- The effect of ambulatory oxygen therapy in COPD patients with transient exertional hypoxemia
- Relationship of interns' working hours to medical errors
- The effect of an intensive smoking cessation approach on adult asthmatic patients after an acute exacerbation of asthma

The compound title is also quite common in biomedical writing and normally consists of two phrases in succession. Most often, the initial phrase is the main title of the paper, and the second phrase serves to further delimit the theme of the paper. Examples would be:

- Ambulatory oxygen therapy: effectiveness in COPD patients with transient exertional hypoxemia
- Relationship of interns' working hours to medical errors: a moral dilemma
- Adult asthmatic patients: the effect of an intensive smoking cessation approach following an acute exacerbation of asthma

Another popular form of the compound title combines the theme of the study with the methodology. For example:

- Treatment Effect of Dietary Fiber on Serum Phosphorus and Quality of Life in Hemodialysis Patients with Constipation: A Randomized Controlled Trial
- Analysis of Serum 10 Years Prior to 1st Diagnosis of Hepatitis C Related Hepatocellular Carcinoma: A Case-Control Study
- The Influence of A New Standardized Program of Neonatal Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation Training in Japan – A Population-Based Cohort Study

Occasionally used for biomedical articles, but rare in other genres, is the title consisting of a full sentence. While the length may be problematic, a full sentence is less ambiguous than a nominal or compound title, and so provides good service to the reader. Examples might be:

- Full-face helmets provide greater protection in motorcycle accidents than other helmet designs.
- The introduction of a standardized neonatal resuscitation protocol has reduced complications of asphyxia.
- The use of semi-solid nutriment reduces the risk of aspiration pneumonia in tube feeding.

Less commonly, one also sees the title worded as a question. For example:

- Do full-face helmets provide greater protection in motorcycle accidents than other helmet designs?
- Does the introduction of a standardized neonatal resuscitation protocol reduce complications of asphyxia?
- Does the use of semi-solid nutriment reduce the risk of aspiration pneumonia in tube feeding?

Capitalization and punctuation should be according to the instructions of our target journal. There will also be limits on the length of the title. Within these constraints, however, our task is to capture the interest of our audience so that they are encouraged to access the full article.

## Key Points

1. The title of an article should be written with the singular intention of capturing the interest of potential readers.
2. There are four equally acceptable styles for titles of biomedical articles:
  - Nominal
  - Compound
  - Full sentence
  - Question

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