

# The Importance of a Great Title

The title is perhaps the single-most important element of your research paper. It is the first thing that journal editors and reviewers see when they look at your paper and the only piece of information that fellow researchers will see in a database or search engine query.

Therefore, you want to make sure the title captures all of the relevant aspects of your study, but does show in a way that is accessible and captivating to readers. Follow these steps to create a perfect title for your paper.

## This video includes:

- A explanation of why the research paper title is important
- Step-by-step instruction of how to write a strong title
- Tips for what to add and what to avoid in your title

## Who should watch this video:

- ★Those submitting their research paper to a journal
- ★Researchers, professors, and graduate students who need some assistance creating a title

# How to Construct Your Title

## Step 1: Ask yourself a few questions about your research paper

What does your paper seek to answer and what does it accomplish. Try to answer these questions as briefly as possible, with one or two sentences each. You can create these questions by going through each section of the paper and finding the MOST relevant information.

### "What is my Paper About?"

*"My paper studies how **program volume** affects **outcomes** for **liver transplant patients** on **waiting lists**."*

### "What methods/techniques did I use to perform my study?"

*"I employed a **case study**."*

### "What or who was the subject of my study?"

*"I studied **60 cases** of liver transplant patients on a waiting this throughout the **US** aged **20-50 years**."*

### "What were the results?"

*"My study revealed a **positive correlation** between wait list volume and **negative prognosis** of **transplant procedure**."*

## Step 2: Identify and list keywords and phrases from these responses

- program volume                      -60 cases
- outcomes                                -US / ages 20-50
- liver transplant patients           -positive correlation
- waiting lists                           -negative outcome
- case study                              - transplant procedure
  
- 60 cases

## Step 3: Use these keywords to create one long sentence

*"This study employed a case study of 60 liver transplant patients around the US aged 20-50 years to assess how the waiting list volume affects the outcome of liver transplantation in patients; results indicate a positive correlation between increased waiting list volume and a negative prognosis after transplant procedure."*

This sentence is obviously much too long for a title, which is why you will trim and polish it in the next two steps.

## Step 4: Create a working title

To create a working title, remove elements that make it a complete "sentence" but keep everything that is most important to what the study is about. Delete all unnecessary and redundant words that are not central to the study or that researchers would most likely not use in a database search.

*~~"This study used a case study of 60 liver transplant patients around the US aged 20-50 years to assess how the waiting list volume affects the outcome of liver transplantation in patients; results indicate a positive correlation between increased waiting list volume and a negative prognosis after transplant procedure."~~*

Now shift some words around for proper syntax and rephrase it a bit to shorten the length and make it leaner and more natural. What you are left with is:

*"A case study of 60 liver transplant patients around the US aged 20-50 years assessing the impact of waiting list volume on outcome of transplantation and showing a positive correlation between increased waiting list volume and a negative prognosis." (Word Count: 38)*

This is getting closer to what we want in a title, which is just the most important information. But note that the word count for this working title is still 38 words, whereas the average published journal article is 16 words or fewer. Therefore we need to eliminate some words and phrases that are not essential to this title.

## Step 5: Eliminate all extra words or phrases to meet a suitable word count; place keywords at the beginning and end of your title

Since the number of patients studied and the exact outcome are not the most essential parts of this paper, remove these elements first:

*“A case study of 60 liver transplant patients around the US aged 20–50 years assessing the impact of waiting list volume on outcome of transplantation and showing a positive correlation between increased waiting list volume and a negative prognosis.”* (Word Count: 19)

In addition, the methods used in a study are not usually the most searched-for keywords in databases and represent additional details that you may want to remove to make your title leaner. So what is left is:

*“Assessing the impact of waiting list volume on outcome and prognosis in liver transplantation patients”* (Word Count: 15)

In this final version of the title, one can immediately recognize the subject and what objectives the study aims to achieve. Note the important terms are written at the beginning and end of the title: “*Assessing,*” which is the main action of the study, is placed at the beginning; and “*liver transplantation patients,*” the specific subject of the study, is placed at the end. This will aid significantly in being found in search engine and database queries, meaning that a lot more researchers will be able to locate your article once it is published.

## **Adding a subtitle**

If you feel that a subtitle might be needed to give more immediate detail about methodology or sample, you can do this by putting this information after a colon:

*“: a case study of US adult patients ages 20-25”*

If we abide strictly by our word count rule this may not be necessary or recommended. But every journal has its own standard formatting and style guidelines for titles, so it is a good idea to be aware of these while writing both the title and the study itself.

## **Some Title Tips to Keep in Mind**

In addition to the steps given above, there are a few other important things you want to keep in mind when it comes to titles regarding formatting, word count, and content:

- Write the title after you’ve written your paper and abstract
- Include all of the essential terms in your paper
- Keep it short and to the point (~16 words or fewer)
- Avoid any jargon or abbreviations
- Use keywords that closely relate to the content of your paper
- Never include a period at the end—your title is not a sentence

We hope you find these tips helpful as you craft this very important part of your manuscript.

For more useful writing tips, check out these posts on our “Resources” page:

["How to Write the Best Journal Submissions Cover Letter"](#)

["How to Write the Best Title for Your Journal Manuscript"](#)

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