

Bonus Report



How To Write Irresistible Titles For Blog Posts



selfdevelopment
network



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Without a doubt, the title is the most important component of any blog post.

Why? Because for most readers, the decision whether or not to read the rest of your post is based on it.

In addition, your blog post titles appears in search engine results, RSS feeds, links from other bloggers, social media sites, Twitter updates, and on your archive pages (depending on how you format them).

Write dull, confusing or complicated titles, and it doesn't matter how great the actual content of your posts may be – very few people will ever click through to read them.

In this report, I'll lay out my top ten tips for writing irresistible titles for your blog posts – titles that will draw viewers almost magnetically into visiting and reading the posts in question.

Lets start with perhaps the most basic...

1. Keep It Short

Take a look at this screengrab showing the Google Reader widget on my Google iPage. This lists the titles of all the latest blog posts and articles to appear in my RSS feed...

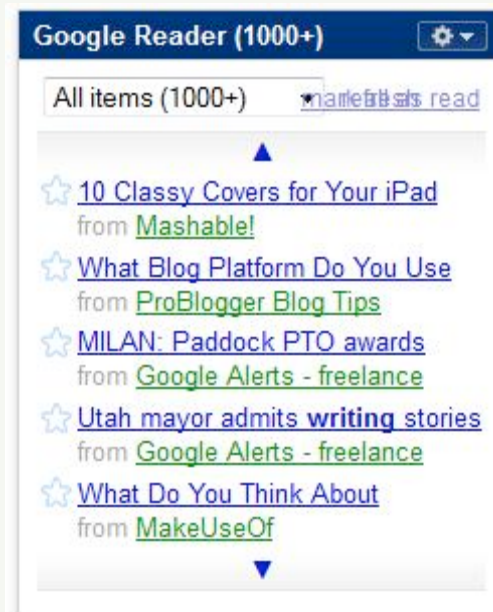


Figure 1 – Google Reader iPage widget

You can see immediately that only the first four to six words are included in the iPage widget. That's still enough for some of these titles – the first two, for example, make it crystal clear what the post is about.

On the other hand, what about that last one in particular? OK, if I was curious, I might click through to see what the question was about. On the other hand, with all the other interesting-looking posts to explore, I'd very likely skip over it and then forget about it.

This is an extreme example, admittedly, but it does illustrate the value of creating short titles, or at least titles that make their meaning clear in the first few words. As a rule of thumb, I recommend keeping most of your blog post titles to 70 characters or less. This will result in most social networks, RSS feeds, email clients, displaying the entire title. And if someone wants to 'retweet' a link to your post on Twitter, even with the additional characters this creates, they should still be well within Twitter's 140-character limit.

2. Set Out Your Key Benefit

It's always good to make clear in your title how the reader will benefit by reading the post in question.

If a reader sees a title that promises to solve a problem or need they have, they are very likely to click on it. And, of course, if they are searching online for information on this subject, your post title is likely to appear high in their results list. Some typical examples might include...

How to build a brick barbecue

Natural cures for insomnia

How to cook perfect poached eggs

Ways to earn a sideline income

Quoting song lyrics in fiction

Be sure that if you use this technique in your post title, your blog post does actually supply the information promised, or at least point the reader to other resources that will.

This approach will not persuade everyone who sees the title to read the post in question, but it does work very well at attracting people with the need your post is addressing.

3. Use Keywords

I talked about using keywords in post titles when we were discussing search engine optimization in the main manual.

To remind you, in Chapter 4 I suggested using tools such as the [Google AdWords Keyword Suggestion Tool](#) to research relevant search terms people are using. These will be terms that you want your blog to rank well for in the search engines, so that people are more likely to see your blog in their search results lists and click through to visit.

Once you have chosen the keywords or phrases you want to target in a blog post, make the most important words first in your title as long as they look reasonably natural. Use other relevant, important and/or identifying keywords in the title as well – again, as long as this does not look unnatural or make the title inordinately long (see Tip 1).

As I said in the main manual, you may not want to use SEO on every blog post – but where you are specifically targeting certain keywords and phrases, it's important to use them in the title if at all possible.

Keywords aren't just good for generating search traffic and improving your SE rankings for the terms concerned, by the way. If someone is currently interested in a particular topic (Amazon Kindle, for example), seeing that term in your post title will attract them like a beacon. This can work especially well if you regularly blog about specific products, brands and companies.

4. Be Controversial

The blogosphere is awash with bland post titles. So another technique that can work well in attracting people to a blog post is to set the scene for controversy or debate. Here are some possible examples:

Everything you have read about weight-loss is wrong
Seven reasons most would-be novelists won't succeed
Why marriage is an outdated institution

Obviously, you need to be able to back up these titles with posts that support the arguments they make.

Controversy is a great tool for grabbing readers' interest. But bear in mind that, when you court controversy, you'll generate strong reactions in people, and not all of them will agree with you. This may not therefore be such a good technique for bloggers who lack a thick skin!

5. Bring the Reader in

Try to use 'you' and/or 'your' in your titles wherever possible.

This is, of course, a tried-and-trusted copywriting technique for generating engagement with prospects, but it works equally well with blog posts.

Compare these two possible post titles, for example:

Best websites for online job-hunters

How you can find your next job online

I'm willing to bet that the second title would attract a lot more click-throughs than the first.

This is really all about psychology, of course. When you write blog posts, you are potentially writing for thousands of readers. If you use 'you' in the title (and content), however, readers can feel as though the post is laser-targeted on them in particular.

6. Start With a Number

I hinted at this technique earlier. It's a very powerful one, especially combined with some of the other approaches set out here.

Here are a few real-life examples, taken from recent blog post titles appearing in my newsreader...

3 Simple Healthy Habits for Writers

4 Things That Totally Suck About Using Technology in School

The 7 Web Pages You Need to Make Money Online

4 Creative Ways to Securely Password Protect Your Computer

10 Ways to Find New Freelance Clients

People love post titles like these, because they promise valuable information in bite-sized portions. And as a blogger, of course, such titles make it very easy to structure the post in question.

I'm a big fan of this technique and use it regularly on my own blog. I also find that such posts are particularly good for attracting Twitter retweets and mentions on other social networks – which in turn generates further traffic to the posts concerned.

It's best to resist the temptation to use the technique all the time, or it may lose some of its impact (and start to annoy some of your readers). But as long as you use other methods for some post titles, it should prove highly effective for bringing more readers to your posts.

7. Ask a Question

This is another of those copywriting techniques that also works with blog post titles.

If your title is a question, and it concerns something the reader is very interested in, they will be irresistibly drawn to your post to see if you can answer it.

Here are a few real-life examples of question-style post titles:

What's the Best Way to Get Started as a Freelance Writer?

Why Your Nonprofit Needs to Stop Ignoring LinkedIn

Why Similar Blogs Sell for Different Prices

Do You Change Your Freelance Writing Habits on the Lead-Up to Christmas?

Are You an Overwhelmed Freelancer?

Questions as post titles can be very effective not only for drawing in readers, but also for getting them to leave comments. This works particularly well if the question in the title is addressed directly at the reader (i.e. it uses the words 'you' and/or 'your' in the question).

8. Intrigue the Reader

Titles with a hint of mystery or intrigue will always attract readers.

One old post on my own blog that still attracts a steady stream of visitors is [What Mr Sanders Taught Me](#) (as a matter of interest, as you'll discover if you visit the post in question, this is a rule I learned from my old English teacher about where to place the possessive apostrophe).

A few other such titles from my feed reader are listed below...

Book Country Fail
RIM Wants You to Forget Your Office
Success Has Many Fathers
Worth Writing Home About
The Amish Guide to Intelligent Web Design

There are, of course, risks to this approach. While some may be intrigued by such titles, others may be puzzled or even irritated. As a result, some folk who might have been attracted by a more straightforward title may end up looking elsewhere instead. It can also be difficult to SEO this type of title, unless you are able to include one or two keywords as well (thus probably giving away what the post is about).

Nonetheless, intriguing titles do attract readers, as people are endlessly curious. In my opinion the occasional 'mystery' title is great for keeping readers interested and engaged with your blog, though personally I wouldn't advise using it as a regular technique.

I must, though, admit that some bloggers – for example, [Shoemoney](#) – use this approach with many, or even most, of their post titles. In such cases, it becomes part of their personal style or brand. In any event, I guess when you're as successful as Jeremy Schoemaker is, you can afford to break a few rules!

9. Use ‘Power’ Words

Some words create a stronger emotional response in readers than others. Here are a few that can work well (although see my disclaimer below):

Free – We all love the idea of getting something for nothing, so anything that is described as ‘free’ is likely to generate an interested response.

Discover – Everyone likes to make discoveries. A related word is ‘revealed’, as in, ‘The best ways to make money from freelance writing revealed’.

Secrets – Again, we all love the idea of being let in on secrets that few other people know, with all the presumed advantages this will give us. Similarly, you could use ‘Little Known Ways to...’ as an alternative to ‘secrets’.

Easy – Just like ‘free’, we all like ‘easy’, don’t we? ‘Quick’ is another good one, maybe combined in ‘quick and easy’.

New – We all like to think we are among the first to discover something good. ‘New’ is a very powerful word, which explains why it appears so often in advertising copy.

And now the disclaimer: power words can be great for generating a response in readers, but they can also trigger negative reactions. Some people become skeptical when they see titles including these words and resist clicking on them, while others may do so but get angry if (in their view) the post doesn’t live up to the claims in the title.

It’s important to remember as well that these words are also commonly associated with spam emails and over-hyped sales letters. If someone subscribes to your blog by email, for example, a post with a title including one or more of these words is much more likely to be blocked by their spam filter.

As with ‘mystery’ titles, there are both pros and cons to having power words in titles, so I recommend using them in moderation, and only for posts where you judge that the benefits will outweigh the drawbacks. In suitable cases, though, the benefits of using these words in titles can be considerable.

- For a longer list of power words, check out [this blog post which includes a list of ‘186 Power Words for Selling’](#).

10. Avoid These Mistakes

Finally, to avoid sabotaging your own title, here are a few things to avoid...

- 1) Don't put a period (full stop) after your post title. This simply looks amateurish.
- 2) Don't always use the same approach for your title, as this will soon bore or even irritate your readers. Mix it up!
- 3) Don't use 'apologetic' titles, e.g. 'Sorry I've Not Posted for a While' or even 'I'm Not Dead Yet' (which I saw recently). This is a big turn-off for readers.
- 4) Don't allow spelling or grammatical mistakes to creep into titles – double-check (at least) before you hit 'Publish'.
- 5) Don't write titles that make your blog look like a private club from which the uninitiated reader is excluded. An example I saw recently is, 'NSFD Friday – Last Call'. Any idea what this might mean? Me neither. OK, if you read the blog post in question, I'm sure all would be explained. But how many people will just assume that this is something from which they are excluded, and move on?

One last tip is to spend some time studying the titles and headlines that are used in popular newspapers and magazines. The people behind these publications are past masters in the art of title writing. You can learn a lot from them about the types and patterns of words that work well in headlines.

I also recommend following the [ProBlogger](#) and [CopyBlogger](#) websites, as both regularly publish valuable tips and advice on copywriting generally and title-writing in particular. And they also, of course, apply these principles themselves, meaning that a study of their post titles is an education in itself.

Good luck – now go write loads of great titles for your blog posts!

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