

Increase Book Sales with a Great Title: 9 Tips

by Chazda Albright -

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We do [judge a book by its cover](#) and today more than ever, as the book industry is booming. [Thousands of new books are published every day](#) (it's quickly nearing 7,000 per day, worldwide).

*If you want to increase book sales, it's important to know that right now, the book **title** has become the most important aspect of the cover. This was not always the case. In fact, it's a relatively new development.*

The influence of the Internet on book selling and book buying has made book titles a make-it or break-it point in the success of a book.

Here's what you need to know.

Key Word searches and searchtool defaults mean that words chosen for a book title matter more now than ever before.

Even just thirty years ago, no one would have ever suggested that you should test your book title for its

word choice effectiveness. Now this is quickly becoming the norm.

SEO: Search Engine Optimization.

Search Engine Optimization, known as SEO, is the buzzword that all self-published authors absolutely must know and understand how to use.

There are various special programs to help you optimize your SEO for specific words, but you don't really need to purchase those to come up with a solid title. Those programs are based on clever algorithms, but they don't really tap into what makes people respond – or not.

Here's what to keep in mind when creating your book's title.

1. Be original.

You don't want to use a title that has been used before. The issue isn't about copyright, because titles cannot be copyrighted. (They can be trademarked.) But if you want people to find your book, you should definitely not go with a simple title that has been repeatedly used before.

When books that went Out Of Print (OOP) were relegated to small used bookshops, there was no fear of one book being confused with another new book with the same title. It was a non-issue because the old books simply went off the retail market.

That's no longer what happens. OOP books are now listed on Amazon.com right along with all the new releases. -and CDs and DVDs too. Your new title can easily get lost along the list of search results if your title isn't original enough.

The easiest thing to do is Google the title you have in mind. Also search for it on Amazon.

2. Be emotionally specific.

By this, I mean that your title should reflect the story. If the story is sad, then the title should seem sad. If the story is funny, then a funny title should be on the cover.

3. Be perspective specific.

A story in [first person](#), should probably have a first person title. For example, "My Summer in Hell" could be a funny travelogue romance – or something like that.

When a story is in third person, the title should definitely not be in first person. It would be misleading, to say the least.

4. Don't be vague or deceptive.

Don't come up with a title so that people don't know what kind of story it might be. Intriguing is great,

and especially for adult titles this can be a great way to inspire curiosity. Books for young readers can also be mysterious or intriguing, but they should not be deceptive.

5. Be Polysemantic.

I love this word. It means having more than one meaning. When it comes to titles, the best ones are those that have one meaning before you've read the story, and another meaning after reading.

A great example of this is Diane Keaton's book, **Let's Just Say It Wasn't Pretty**. This title is a saying in America, so the words are recognizable and have a sense of quirk. It's a title that makes you smirk a little.

When you've read the book, these words change meaning completely. Keaton's book flips the meaning of the words, making it a beautiful statement that is reaffirming.

It's hard to imagine something like this happening with an illustrated book for children, *but wouldn't it be fantastic?*

6. Be age appropriate.

If the book is for little kids, then know that certain words will have *no meaning* for them at all. For stories geared towards somewhat older kids, it can sometimes be hard to determine what words would work and what wouldn't.

Don't dumb-down your vocabulary. But I would say that if you have doubts about how familiar a 12-year old might be with Greek mythology, you might not want a mythological-specific term in the title. Maybe.

The title should not be so obscure (for that age group) so that the intended readership would need to read the book in order to understand the title. The title should hint at what the story is about, not the other way around.

7. Be attentive about what's out there.

It's really important that your book get found where it should be found. Your book title will determine that.

If your book should end-up in the wrong categories, you or your publisher can get that changed. BUT it takes effort and time and patience, and while you're busy trying to fix that you're losing sales.

Too, you need to fix it on every single online platform where your book appears. This means many hours of extra work. Pointless work you can avoid by simply coming up with a great title.

A Great Bad Example

The book **The Northern Lights** by Philip Pullman is the first book in a fantasy adventure series, not that

you'd be able to guess that by the title.

This is a terrible title! As someone who once spent a college semester in Alaska, my association with those words is very specific and has nothing to do with a fantasy adventure.

As you might imagine, a search *on any search engine* will result in all sorts of coffee table and travelogue books about the Northern Lights - the real ones. Not Pullman's book.

Someone at some point (prior to publication) should have vetoed the title and come up with a better one.

When the book was adapted to film, the title was (at last) changed to **The Golden Compass**, a much better title. Now the book itself is released with this other, better title.

8. Be aware of *great* book titles.

This is actually one of my hobbies. I love to take note of great book titles and what makes them great. I also love to come up with fun titles – just to do it. I write down titles and think about what the book could be about. Sometimes I write it, sometimes I plan to write it and sometimes I decide to just keep it a title and leave it at that.

If you ever get stuck in a rut, you might try this exercise. Come up with titles for books you aren't writing yet. Just something you think would sound interesting. Then jot down ideas of what you think that book would be about.

For various ages, and in no particular order, here are some great book titles:

- Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day
- Where the Wild Things Are
- The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (and any other title from Douglas Adams)
- A Wrinkle in Time
- The Importance of Being Earnest
- Still Me (Christopher Reeve autobiography)
- Reading Lolita in Tehran
- Zombies vs. Unicorns
- An Arsonist's Guide to Writer's Homes in New England
- Green Eggs and Ham
- Gone Girl
- Get Your Tongue Out of My Mouth, I'm Kissing You Goodbye!
- Running with Scissors
- Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There
- Everyone Poops
- The Monster at the End of This Book

9. Use specifics.

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As with any other aspect of writing, you should be as rich in your word choices for the title as you would be with the manuscript. Don't slap on a quick title just to give your manuscript some sort of name.

The title is what needs to distinguish your book from the rest of what's out there.

Some might argue that the title shouldn't be chosen until the book has already been written. I disagree. That isn't to say you might not change the title along the way, but I do think it's important, especially for writers of book series, to think about the book titles they want in their series.

This gives your characters direction, direction that readers follow along - to join the adventure.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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