

Choosing Your Book's Title: Some Tips by Author Lesley Lodge

Choosing your book's title can seriously help or hinder your sales when you come to the marketing and publicity for your finished book. Even when you think you have found a pithy, attention-grabbing title that promises a really good read in your chosen genre and style, it still pays to do a bit of thinking and research before making your final decision. I found out the hard way that there are some pitfalls to avoid.

Here are three:

1) Try to include your key word(s) in the title rather than only in the sub-title. My first book is a non-fiction one about horses in film and on TV. My title: "Lights! Camera! Gallop! The Story of the Horse in Film." Yes, search engines will pick up "horse" and "film" even though they are in the sub-title. But the mighty Amazon machine which sends those helpful alerts along the lines of "you might also like" clearly use the title. So sometimes it picks a whole set of lighting products....

2) Avoid any word that is spelled differently in American English from how it is in UK English (or vice versa. I was going to write "spelt differently" – but that's a UK English option – it must be "spelled" in American English. You see what I mean? My third book's title is "Horse and Pony Colours" and its subtitle is "Which would you choose?" You notice I'd learnt from mistake number 1 above: my keywords are in the title not the sub-title. And I'd followed a suggestion I'd read that non-fiction titles should show the reader what it is that the book offers them. But "colour" is of course spelled "color" in American English. The search engines do still find the book from either side of the Atlantic – but they flag up "Did you mean Horse and Pony Colors?" So now there could be a tiny suggestion at the back of the reader's mind: can't this author even spell?

3) Be sure to research your proposed title before settling on it. How many already published books have the same or a similar title? You don't have to avoid duplicating an existing title if there's only one other book with the same title or a very similar one. But you might want to avoid the duplication. I edited some stories recently: "Night Mission: 7 WWII era stories" by Clive Lodge. The "Night Mission" bit came from one of the strongest stories in the collection. I nearly called it "The Tunnel" after one of the other stories and I'd chosen some great cover pictures of mysterious tunnels. But then the title and cover hinted at science fiction rather than the Second World War adventures that the stories were actually about. "Night Mission" – with a Spitfire in the evening cloud on the cover – fitted much better. A quick search only threw up one other "Night Mission" – and since that one was about "one-night stands" and sported an obviously sexy cover I doubted there would be too much confusion.

So, take choosing your title seriously – avoid my mistakes – and good luck!



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