# Creating Effective Research and Project Titles

You have a topic that’s near and dear to you, and you want to present your project or research at a conference such as [LABCON](https://labcon.csmls.org/). You may have the most fascinating and useful information that all laboratories absolutely *need* to know about, but this must be communicated to the target audience. Conferences typically have multiple sessions happening at the same time, and attendees must plan their time wisely to make the best of the conference. How will they know to attend your presentation and not someone else’s? Marketing your work is important and should not be considered a useless step in your research or project.

The importance of your presentation needs to be communicated to the conference attendees using the title and description of the content you are presenting.

## **Aspects of Writing a Good Title**

The title of your work is more than just what it is called — it is the first thing the reader is exposed to. For that reason, it is crucial to grab their attention, and there are several aspects that should be considered when crafting your title to maximize this potential.

A title needs to be clear and articulate the author’s ideas. What is your poster or presentation about? Use specific terms so that the audience knows what to expect. The title “Research Project in Hematology” could be about anything, but “Effects of Anticoagulants on Erythrocytes” gives the audience a much better idea what your work is about. This, in turn, can be made more specific — “Variation of Erythrocyte Parameters with Exposure of Different Anticoagulants”— to grab the attention of those especially interested in the subject.

Avoid oversharing information in the title to maintain interest so that attendees still want to attend the presentation and don’t get *all* the information they need from the title. Need some short rules to make your title clear? Think about these when writing a title:

* Make the title **useful** to the reader. Include the idea, work and context in the title.
  + Make the reader feel an **urgency, curiosity or concern**
  + Convey what is **unique or beneficial** about your results
  + Be **specific** — but leave some mystery
* Keep it concise (no more than 12 words or 80 characters with spaces)

There are other optional elements that authors can use to make their title stronger and more interesting:

**The Promise:** Not all posters and presentations are about research. For example, you may be presenting your expertise or explaining an interesting event that occurred in your laboratory. A good title can directly tell the audience what it is about and attract its target audience in the process. Two common promises of content are the promises of “benefits” (e.g., this is what you will learn or this is how this will benefit you) and “story” (e.g., case reports or how situation A became situation B).

Remember to use descriptive adjectives! There is a huge difference in attention-grabbing potential between “How to Write a PowerPoint Presentation” and “How to Deliver a Fantastic and Engaging Presentation.”

**Number for Emphasis:** Adding a number to the title can add interest by focusing attention to it. This is the difference between “Common Mistakes in the Histotechnology Laboratory” and “The Six Most Common Mistakes Histotechnologists Make.” While the first title is a bit vague, adding the emphasis can create hype and catch interest by making the audience think, “I better go find out what these six most common mistakes are to prevent them.”

**Provoke emotion:** A good title can provoke emotion to attract attention to itself. It can either appeal to novelty (“A Novel Method/Approach/Treatment for…”), concern (“Most Common Mistakes Technologists Make”) or urgency (“Impending Human Resource Shortage for Laboratory Staff”).

It is okay to make your title fun if it will truly motivate the viewer to find out more information. However, if your personality, presentation description and presentation content do not match the tone and expectations of the title, you are likely to disappoint attendees. If you are not sure if the title’s impact will be positive, it is best to make the title more formal instead. Here are some examples of fun titles by Christine Bruce that received positive reviews and interest from LABCON attendees:

* + - “Chicken & Floor Wax — The Secret to Employee Engagement”
    - “Stick With the Turkey You Know”

Want some additional resources? Check out these links for more tips and tricks:

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| * [How to write a presentation title that gets people flocking to your session](https://speakingaboutpresenting.com/content/presentation-title/) * [Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Choosing a Title](https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/title) (applies to general science) | * [Writing an Effective Session Proposal](https://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/National_Conferences/CSM/Submissions/WritingProposal.pdf) * [How to Write Well-Defined Learning Objectives](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5944406/) * [Creating a Great Conference Proposal](https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/presentationready/conf_proposal) (video) |

Need some examples to get you started? Here are some titles from presentations that were accepted to LABCON.

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| **Presenting your personal experience:**  Working in Sierra Leone During the Ebola Crisis (Sgt. Jean-Sebastien Pellan)  My Mental Health Journey (Lorenne Friesen)  The Crash of Swissair Flight 111 (Dr. John Butt)  Tip: Stating the event can be enough in personal experience titles if the event is generalizable to others or a well-known event. | **Presenting your research or project:**  A Human Factors and Analytical Assessment of HbA1c Point-Of-Care Testing in a Pediatric Diabetes Clinic (Johanna Thayer and Kes Carson)  The Journey of Managing Amniotic Fluid pH Testing in Obstetrics: Creation of a Quality Framework to Satisfy Accreditation Standards (Robert Kerekes)  Tip: Include the idea, work and context in the title. These titles tend to be more complex and longer than other title types. |
| **Presenting a case study:**  Reforming Laboratory Services in New Brunswick: Our Challenges and Future Outlook (Yves Goudreau)  Simulation, This is Not a Test! Lessons Learned from Implementation (Meagan Homer and Brady Rose)  Wastewater Management in the Lab: Case Study on Sodium Azide (Louise Nagy)  Tip: Create the urgency, curiosity or concern about the case study in your title. These titles have more allowance to be “catchy,” depending on the subject matter. | **Presenting your expertise:**  Best Practice in Blood Culture Collection for Phlebotomists and Nurses (Susan Csatari)  Personalized Medicine, Artificial Intelligence Systems and the Medical Laboratory Sciences (Peter Bridge)  Build Your Resilience Reflex - How to Shift From Chaos To Control (Zaheen Nanji)  Tip: Directly state what expertise you are presenting on, especially if you are well-known for the topic. |