



How to Make Your Title Rock!

You've finished your novel and revised it 9,000 times. It's ready to make its weary way to a publisher. Only one hitch, you don't have a title that rocks.

Creative lightning strikes and you wake up one morning with a song in your heart and realise it's perfect title for your book: *Those Were the Days*. It feels just right. All your friends think it is fabbo. It absolutely encapsulates the theme of your novel, which is set around a school reunion. It has a comfortable familiar feel to it – yes!

Only problem is that it actually sucks.

Fiction titles are tricky because the commercial reality is that the title is not a creative interpretation of the essence of your story. It's the name of your product and an essential part of the packaging.

Illustrating my point is this product name: **'Crunchy Nut Cornflakes'**.

We get from the 'title' that it's fun in a noisy crunchy way. It's nutty too - a little bit mad. It's not a serious bowel-moving chaff type product. More for people who want to jazz up their morning with a frivolous, delicious cereal.

Let's check out the blurb:

"Kellogg's Crunchy Nut is so ludicrously tasty! Delicious, sun-ripened flakes of corn, drizzled in smooth, clear honey and encrusted with handfuls of chopped nuts to give you the simply irresistible taste of Kellogg's Crunchy Nut."

Okay, it's corn, honey & nuts but also ludicrous, smooth, clear, sun-ripened, drizzled, encrusted and irresistible.

So, let's take a completely pragmatic view: the book title is designed to market a wad of paper and differentiate it from thousands of other similar products. What is written on that wad of paper is only relevant in so much as the packaging needs appeal to the 'right' reader – which is why publishers are so genre conscious.

The reason my invented title *Those Were the Days* sucks (my opinion only, it's not an exact science) is that it is old-fashioned, vague, alludes to something that is lost or has already taken place, like we missed the best part. It lacks a noun. It's old hat.

My original title for *The Olive Sisters* was *Wild Olives* but something similar was published in the meantime and so I submitted 20+ possible titles to my publisher and we picked *The Olive Sisters*

which – as it turns out – is a rocking title. It has Google exclusivity. It's memorable. The title has humans in it and I guess people like things to do with olives.

My original title for *Two for the Road* was *Sweet As*, which I loved, my editor loved but marketing hated. I accept (now) that my title lacked crunchability and unfortunately we never managed to come up with the perfect title for this novel – it happens.

So, let's get back to your title. Think about your genre, who will your story appeal to?

Research all the titles published in your genre in the last six months. Styles of titles go in and out of fashion. If a couple of single word titles go off (*Twilight*) it starts a trend. You can't guess or even keep up with the trend but you can try to come up with a title that is intriguing, memorable, original and will reach out to your particular readers.

A publisher may change your title but a great title can help you get a publisher. As one publisher put it: 'A dreary title doesn't bode well for the contents.' It's important.

Get out there, do the research and find that crunchy, nutty, ludicrous, sun-ripened, drizzled, encrusted, irresistible and unforgettable title.

PS: If you sign up to [Write! Newsletter](#) you'll receive a free report that gives you some insights to publisher's pet peeves and tips for getting read.