

Using Italics

What is the purpose of italics?

Italics are used primarily to denote titles and names of particular works or objects in order to allow that title or name to stand out from the surrounding sentence. Italics may also be used for emphasis in writing, but only rarely. Overuse of this option dilutes the effectiveness of the font and can distract the reader.

Italicized type is used...

Italicized type looks like...

⇒ **To specify titles of certain creative works**

Such works are: books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets/booklets, plays, long poems, movies, TV shows, radio shows, musical compositions, choreographic works, works of visual art, comic strips, and software programs. Make sure you italicize the *entire* title—if there is a question mark in the title itself, then italicize it.

- My daughter's favorite book is *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*

- **My daughter's favorite book is *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?***

⇒ **To specify certain vehicles**

Such as ships, aircraft, spacecrafts, and trains.

- The Titanic sank in 1912.

- **The *Titanic* sank in 1912.**

⇒ **To specify foreign words within English text**

- "Do all coins say *e pluribus unum?*" she asked.

- **Do all coins say *e pluribus unum?*" she asked.**

⇒ **To specify scientific names of plants and animals**

- An *Orchis mascula* doesn't sound as "orchid."

- **An *Orchis mascula* doesn't sound as "orchid."**

⇒ **To specify words, letters, and numbers used as themselves**

To achieve the same effect, one may also place these in quotation marks.

- You use the word *very* too much in this paper.

- **You use the word *very* too much in this paper.**

Using Italics

Do NOT italicize...

Italicized type looks like...

⇒ Sacred texts, books of sacred texts,
or legal documents

• *Esther* is my favorite book of the *Bible*.

• **Esther is my favorite book of the Bible.**

⇒ Foreign-based words that have
been integrated into the English
language

• The *alumni* dinner begins at 6:30 PM.

• **The alumni dinner begins at 6:30 PM.**