

Italics (underlining)

Wedged between the **B** and the u on the Microsoft Word taskbar is an inconspicuous *I*. It stands for *italics*, which is a font style that offers a rightward slant. Italics are used primarily to indicate the title of a particular work. Often, confusion occurs when a writer tries to recall which works are italicized, which are underlined, and which are indicated by quotation marks. Here's a simple rule: handwritten papers employ the underlining technique while computer-generated papers use italics. To decipher between employing italics or quotation marks, simply refer to the chart below.

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Works to be Indicated by Italics	Works to be Indicated by Quotation Marks
Book Titles	Short Stories
Magazines	Essays
Newspapers	Episodes of a particular radio program
Pamphlets	Episodes of a particular television program
Long Poems	Song Titles
Plays	Short Poems
Films	
Television Programs	
Radio Programs	
Musical Compositions	
Choreographic Works	
Visual Art	
Comic Strips	
Electronic Databases	
Web Sites	
Electronic Games	

Of course, there are complications, and in the off-chance that you make mention of, as Hacker writes, a "spacecraft, aircraft, ship, or train," these names should be italicized as well. The same is true of uncommon foreign phrases in an English sentence.

¹ This list compiled with information from Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*, 6th edition.

But stay vigilant! An excessive use of italics or underlining jeopardizes the integrity of the style. Rarely employ these techniques for emphasis. Allow the emphasis to be garnered by the style of the sentence itself.

Remember, when in doubt, consult a professor. Often, the difference between italics and underlining is simply a matter of preference.