



GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Guidelines for Capitalization

In general, capitalize nouns and adjectives that refer to a special, one-of-a-kind person, place, or thing and words that begin sentences, quotations, or titles.

CAPITALIZE

- people's names and nicknames (Ted Johnson, Bubba, Dad)
- titles that precede names (Doctor Brown, Sergeant Stover)
- titles that clearly refer to only one person of high rank (President, Pope)
- names of races and nationalities (Caucasian, African American, Spaniard, Indian)
- the pronoun "I"

DO NOT CAPITALIZE

- titles that follow names or appear without names (Anna Maguire, professor of music; "The doctor will see you now.")
- family references preceded by a possessive word (my mother, Jerry's dad)

CAPITALIZE

- geographic places (Pensacola, Pace Boulevard, Okaloosa County, Mississippi River, Yellowstone National Park, Appalachian Mountains, Germany, Africa)
- names of most stars and planets (Milky Way, Jupiter)
- names of buildings, institutions, organizations, and government agencies (Barnett Bank, Florida State University, Audubon Society, National Security Agency)
- compass points when they refer to a specific area of the country ("Atlanta is in the South"; "Jack likes Western movies.")

DO NOT CAPITALIZE

- general references to places (river, park, city, college, hotel)
- the following stars and planets: earth, sun, moon
- compass points when they refer only to direction ("Jacksonville is east of Tallahassee.")
- unimportant words within a longer name (a, an, the, conjunctions and prepositions of fewer than five letters, e.g., Statue of Liberty)

CAPITALIZE

- names of days of the week and months of the year (Monday, May)
- names of holidays and historical events (Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, Civil War, Industrial Revolution, Dark Ages)

DO NOT CAPITALIZE

- names of seasons (winter)

CAPITALIZE

- names of languages (French, German, English)
- brand names (Kleenex, Heinz, Baby Ruth)
- school courses followed by a number (Algebra 101, Biology 220)
- the first and all important words in titles of books, magazines, newspapers, articles, poems, stories, etc. (see above for unimportant words, e.g., *Of Time and the River*)
- names of religions and sacred things (Baptist, Bible, Buddha)

DO NOT CAPITALIZE

- standard products—although the product name is capitalized (Kleenex tissues, Heinz ketchup, Baby Ruth candy bars)
- general areas of study (“Cathy is taking algebra.”)
- the word “the” preceding names of books, magazines, newspapers, etc. (the *Village Voice*) unless the word is an official part of the title (*The Glass Menagerie*)
- breed names of animals, generic names of plants, and names of diseases (cocker spaniel, rainbow trout, sugar maple, mumps)
- standard words in names joined with a capitalized word (English bulldog, Cornish hen, African violet, German measles)

CAPITALIZE

- the first word in a sentence; the first word in a direct quote (Mary said, "Stop the car.")
- the first word and all nouns in the greeting of a letter (My dear Sir); the first word in the closing of a letter (Sincerely yours)