

Rules for Capitalization

Examples

1. Capitalizing First Words

- a. Capitalize the first word of every sentence.
- b. Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation.
- c. Capitalize the first word in each line of a poem.
- d. Capitalize the first word of the greeting and all following nouns in a letter.
- e. Capitalize the first word of the complimentary closing in a letter.

Where are you going?
My name is Anna.
How cold I am!
That boy can't speak Italian.

"Why were you late?" asked the teacher.
The student answered, "My car broke down."

'Tis said that absence conquers love;
But oh believe it not!

Dear Mr. Brown, Dear Sir:
Gentlemen:

Sincerely yours, Yours truly,
Very truly yours,

2. Capitalizing Names of Persons

- a. Capitalize a person's given name or names and his family name.
- b. Capitalize all abbreviations used with a person's name, including his initials.
- c. Capitalize titles of respect when they are used before a person's name.
- d. Capitalize words that show relationship, such as mother and father, when they are used in place of a person's name.
- e. Don't capitalize a noun that shows relationship when there is a possessive pronoun before it, unless it is used with a person's name.
- f. The pronoun *I* is always capitalized.

Mary Brown John Doe Igor Bilbinski

Prof. Watson Mr. James A. Smith, Jr.
Dr. Freud Gen. D. D. Eisenhower

President Johnson General Bradley
Queen Victoria Sir Winston Churchill
Miss Brown Father O'Malley

No, Dad, I didn't take your newspaper.
Yes, Mother, I'll be home by twelve.
We visited Grandma last Sunday.
I went to the park with Father.

I wish my mother and father were with me now.
I saw my uncle last night.
But -
My Uncle Willie travels a great deal.

John and I are studying Spanish.
My husband and I went skiing last winter.

3. Capitalizing Place Names

- a. Capitalize the names of definite geographic areas or divisions of the earth's surface.
- b. The words north, south, east, and west are capitalized when they indicate locations. When they indicate a simple direction, they are not capitalized.

the Orient the West Coast
the Arctic Circle the Temperate Zone

Park Avenue is east of Broadway.
We spent our vacation in the West.

Note: The articles (*a, an, the*), the conjunctions (*and, but, or*), and short prepositions (*at, on, by, etc.*) are not capitalized unless used as the first word of a name or title.

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- c. Capitalize the names of rivers, oceans, lakes, islands, and mountains.
- d. Capitalize the names of countries, states, cities, towns, streets, and rural routes.
- e. Capitalize the names of parks and buildings.

4. Capitalizing Titles

- a. Capitalize the first word and each important word in the titles of books, magazines, newspapers, stories, articles, poems, and chapters of books.
- b. Capitalize the first word and each important word in the titles of plays, motion pictures, and radio and television programs.
- c. Capitalize each important word in the titles of famous documents.

5. Capitalizing Religious Terms

- a. Capitalize all names referring to God as well as the names of other deities.
- b. The pronouns he, his, him, thou, they, and thine are capitalized when they refer to the Deity.
- c. Capitalize all names for the Bible, its books and divisions, and names of other sacred books.
- d. Capitalize the names of religious bodies and their place of worship.

6. Capitalizing Expressions of Time

- a. Capitalize the names of the days of the week and the names of the months of the year.
- b. Do not capitalize the names of the seasons.
- c. Capitalize the names of holidays and the names of special occasions.
- d. Capitalize the names of historical events.

Examples

Staten Island Mt. Whitney Lake Como
Atlantic Ocean Amazon River the Andes

England Route 1 Wall Street
Maine Teaneck Fifth Avenue
Italy the United Arab Republic

Grand Central Station Chrysler Building
Empire State Building Central Park

The New York Times *Newsweek*
The Old Man and the Sea
Chapter 2: "The Rules of Grammar"
"How to Build a Bookcase"

Note: The articles (a, an, the), the conjunctions (and, but, or), and short prepositions (at, on, by, to, etc.) are not capitalized unless used as the first word of a name or title.

Death of a Salesman *The Late Show*
My Fair Lady *Mission Impossible*
Tarzan and the Apes

the Magna Carta the Declaration of Independence
the Constitution of the United States

Allah Zeus Christ
Buddha Jehovah the Lord

Trust in God, for He will lead you.

the Koran Book of Genesis
the Talmud the Old Testament
the Good Book

Catholic Jewish Protestant
Buddhist Moslem St. Patrick's Cathedral

Saturday Sunday Monday
June July November

spring fall winter summer

Independence Day Labor Day
Christmas Ramadan

the Renaissance War of the Roses
the Dark Ages First Crusade

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7. Capitalizing Names of Racial Groups, Nationalities and Languages

- a. Capitalize the names of racial groups.
- b. Capitalize the names of nationalities.
- c. Capitalize the names of languages.
- d. Capitalize adjectives derived from the names of racial groups, nationalities, and languages.

8. Capitalizing Trade Names, Names of Organizations, and Transportation

- a. Capitalize the names of organizations and clubs.
- b. Capitalize the names of business firms and the trade names of products.
- c. Capitalize the names of schools and other institutions.
- d. Capitalize the names of departments and agencies of the Federal Government and of state governments.
- e. Capitalize the names of political parties.
- f. Capitalize the names of particular ships, trains, and airplanes.

9. Additional Rules of Capitalization

- a. School subjects are not capitalized unless they are names of languages or of specific numbered courses.
- b. O and Oh: The formal interjections “O,” used in direct address, is always capitalized. The interjection “oh” is not capitalized unless it begins a sentence.

Examples

African-American	Caucasian	Oriental
Mexican	Australian	Swiss
French	Lebanese	Swedish
Italian	German	English
Chinese	Russian	Spanish
a Japanese camera	a Thai silk	
an English terrier	a French cook	

Girl Scouts International Student Association
Young Men’s Christian Association

Ford Motor Company General Motors
Pepperidge Farm Bread Beechnut Gum
Cadillac Mustang

American Language Institute
New York University Memorial Hospital

Department of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

Republican Party Democratic Party

the Chicago Limited the Olympia
the Orient Express the Eagle

She is studying Spanish and chemistry this term.
Mr. Welles is teaching Chemistry I this term.

Oh, did you want this seat?
He spent all his money, and oh, how sorry he was.
Where O where has my little dog gone?
