

Capitalization Rules

1. Capitalize the first word of a quoted sentence.
 - a. Example – *He said, “Treat her as you would your own daughter.”*
2. Capitalize a proper noun.
 - a. Example – *Golden Gate Bridge*
3. Capitalize a person’s title when it precedes the name. Do not capitalize when the title is acting as a description following the name.
 - a. Example – *Chairperson Petrov*
 - b. Example – *Ms. Petrov, the chairperson of the company, will address us at noon.*
4. Capitalize the person’s title when it follows the name on the address or signature line.
 - a. Example – *Ms. Petrov, Chairperson*
5. Capitalize the titles of high-ranking government officials when used with or before their names. Do not capitalize the civil title if it is used instead of the name.
 - a. Examples – *The governors, lieutenant governors, and attorney generals are called a special task force.*
 - b. *Governor Fortinbrass, Lieutenant Governor Poppins, Attorney General Dalloway, and Senators James and Twain will attend.*
6. Capitalize any title when used as a direct address.
 - a. *Will you take my temperature, Doctor?*
7. Capitalize the points of a compass only when they refer to specific regions.
 - a. Examples – *We have had three relatives visit from the South.*
 - b. *Go south and then turn left.*
8. Always capitalize the first and last words of titles of publications, regardless of their parts of speech. Capitalize other words within titles, including the short verb forms *Is, Are, and Be*.
 - a. Exception: Do not capitalize little words within titles such as *a, an, the, but, as, if, and, or, nor*, or prepositions, regardless of their length.
 - b. Example – *The Day of the Jackal*

9. Capitalize *federal* or *state* when used as part of an official agency name or in government documents where these terms represent an official name. If they are being used as general terms, you may use lowercase letters.
 - a. Examples – *The State Board of Equalization collects sales taxes.*
 - b. *We will visit three states during our summer vacation.*
10. You may capitalize words such as *department*, *bureau*, and *office* if you have prepared your text in the following way:
 - a. Example – *The Bureau of Land Management has some jurisdiction over Indian lands. The Bureau is finding its administrative role to be challenging.*
11. Do not capitalize the names of seasons.
 - a. Example – *I love autumn colors and spring flowers.*
12. Capitalize the first word of a salutation and the first word of a complimentary close.
 - a. Example – *My dear Mr. Sanchez*
 - b. *Very truly yours*
13. Capitalize words derived from proper nouns.
 - a. Example – *I must take English and math.*
 - i. Note: *English* is capitalized because it comes from the proper noun *England*, but *math* does not come from *Mathland*.
14. Capitalize the names of specific course titles.
 - a. Example – *I must take history and Algebra 2.*
15. After a sentence ending with a colon, do not capitalize the first word if it begins a list.
 - a. Example – *These are my favorite foods: chocolate cake, spaghetti, and artichokes.*
16. Do not capitalize when only one sentence follows a sentence ending with a colon.
 - a. Example – *I love Jane Smiley’s writing: her book, *A Thousand Acres*, was beautiful.*
17. Capitalize when two or more sentences follow a sentence ending with a colon.
 - a. Example – *I love Jane Smiley’s writing: her book, *A Thousand Acres*, was beautiful. Also, *Moo* was clever.*

Adapted by Mandi Fry, Cairn Peer Writing Consultant, from: Straus, Jane. *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation: An Easy-to-Use Guide with Clear Rules, Real-World Examples, and Reproducible Quizzes*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008. Web. 20 Apr. 2013.