

Rules for Capitalization

Why: Capitalizing the first letter of a word indicates the word is being used in a special way. Here are guidelines which will help you capitalize correctly.

1. Capitalize the first word of a sentence and the pronoun I in any location.

Example: The school bought a computer, and I learned how to use it.

2. Capitalize the first word in a quotation.

Example: Mr. Marsh exclaimed, "Let's do the best we can!"

3. Capitalize the first word and all titles and nouns in the salutation of a letter and the first word in the complimentary close.

Example: Dear Miranda Sincerely yours Very truly yours

4. Capitalize the names of the days of the week, special days (holidays), months of the year, historic events, and eras.

Example: Tuesday Memorial Day American Revolution
Fourth of July December Paleozoic Era

5. Capitalize the first, last, and all other important words in the titles of written works (documents, books, journals, newspapers, reports) and their contents (chapters, sections, articles), works of art and music, and movies.

Example: The Wealth of Nations A Day at the Races
The Declaration of Independence Whitney Houston's The Greatest Love
of All

6. Capitalize nouns and abbreviations referring to parts of a written work only when the reference is followed by a number.

Example: Book IX Chapter 6 Section 2 Volume III

7. Capitalize words referring to a specific religion.

Example: the Creator Buddhism Christian Allah

8. Capitalize the names of people and words associated with the name (places, diseases, etc.)

Example: Joyce M. Wexler Hodgkin's disease David Ponitz Center

9. Capitalize titles in three instances:

A) When immediately preceding a name

Example: Dr. Carl Maxwell Miss Dorothy Mosher Uncle Don

B) After a name in an address of typed signature

Example: Ms. Maria Richards, Director of Personnel Marvin J. Feldman,
Manager

C) Used in the place of a person's name

Example: "I understand your decision, Judge," replied the defendant.
I love you, Grandma.

10. Capitalize the specific names of the following:

- A) geographical sites & places: Rocky Mountains Lake Superior Austin, Texas
- B) regions: the Midwest the South the Middle East
- C) organizations: the United Way American Red Cross Salvation Army
- D) buildings: Union Baptist Church Empire State Building Dunbar High School
- E) works of engineering: Hoover Dam Great Wall of China Jefferson Memorial
- F) state abbreviations: IL OH UT CA WI MI

11. Capitalize words based on nationalities or historical background.

Example: Alaskan Canadians Mexican Chinese

12. Capitalize the name brand but not the generic product's name.

Example: Hostess Twinkies snacks Lava soap Mercedes-Benz automobiles

Below is a list of some words that should NOT be capitalized.

trees: redwood oak willow

flowers: daffodil rose tulip

diseases/illnesses: cancer measles appendicitis

titles following a pronoun/article: my mom our doctor the judge

seasons: fall winter spring

directions: north on Interstate 75 rain from the west southerly winds