



Capitals

Brought to you by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab.

This handout lists some guidelines for capitalization. If you have a question about whether a specific word should be capitalized that doesn't fit under one of these rules, try checking a dictionary to see if the word is capitalized there.

Use capital letters in the following ways:

- **The first words of a sentence**

example : When he tells a joke, he sometimes forgets the punch line.

- **The pronoun "I"**

example : The last time I visited Atlanta was several years ago.

- **Proper nouns**

(the names of specific people, places, organizations, and sometimes things)

examples :

Worrill Fabrication Company
Golden Gate Bridge
Supreme Court

Livingston, Missouri
Atlantic Ocean
Mothers Against Drunk Driving

- **Family relationships**

(when used as proper names)

examples :

I sent a thank-you note to Aunt Abigail, but not to my other aunts.
Here is a present I bought for Mother.
Did you buy a present for your mother?

- **The names of God, specific deities, religious figures, and holy books**

examples:

God the Father
the Virgin Mary
the Bible
the Greek gods

Moses
Shiva
Buddha
Zeus

Exception: Do not capitalize the non-specific use of the word "god."

example: The word "polytheistic" means the worship of more than one god.

- **Titles preceding names, but not title that follow names**

examples:

She worked as the assistant to Mayor Hanolovi.
I was able to interview Miriam Moss, mayor of Littonville.

- **Directions that are names**

(North, South, East, and West when used as sections of the country, but not as compass directions)

examples :

The Patels have moved to the Southwest.
Jim's house is two miles north of Otterbein.

- **The days of the week, the months of the year, and holidays**

(but not the seasons used generally)

examples :

Halloween
October
Friday

winter
spring
fall

Exception: Seasons are capitalized when used in a title.

example: The Fall 1999 semester

- **The names of countries, nationalities, and specific languages**

examples :

Costa Rica	French
Spanish	English

- **The first word in a sentence that is a direct quote**

example : Emerson once said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."

- **The major words in the titles of books, articles, and songs**

(but not short prepositions or the articles "the," "a," or "an," if they are not the first word of the title)

example : One of Ringo's favorite books is The Catcher in the Rye.

- **Members of national, political, racial, social, civic, and athletic groups**

examples:

Green Bay Packers	Democrats
African-Americans	Friends of the Wilderness
Anti-Semitic	Chinese

- **Periods and events**

(but not century numbers)

examples:

Victorian Era	Constitutional Convention
Great Depression	sixteenth century

- **Trademarks**

examples:

Pepsi	IBM
Honda	Microsoft Word

- **Words and abbreviations of specific names**

(but not names of things that came from specific things but are now general types)

examples:

Freudian	UN
NBC	french fries
pasteurize	italics

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