



Capitalization

The conventional guidelines of capitalization sometimes change because we have a changing and growing language. Therefore, although it is necessary to learn the guidelines, it is always a good idea to consult your dictionary when you have a question about capitalizing a word.

FIRST WORD OF SENTENCE

Capitalize the first word of every sentence. Most of us already know this guideline. However, some special situations arise that might be confusing.

1. When you are directly quoting a writer, the first word of the quotation is usually capitalized:
Tandy says, “The phenomenon will continue for years.”
2. When the direct quotation is a complete sentence split by other information, the second part of the quotation begins with a lowercase letter:
“She will not leave on Tuesday,” John said, “because her flight was canceled.”
3. When the direct quotation is two complete sentences split by other information, the second sentence begins with a capital letter:
“The request has been denied,” he said. “The committee would not fund the project.”
4. When you use the colon to introduce a complete sentence for explanation of the preceding sentence, a capital letter is optional:
He is a diligent worker: he works overtime almost every day.
or
He is a diligent worker: He works overtime almost every day.

Remember that the second sentence following a semicolon, however, does not begin with a capital letter:

Andy has a simplistic view of life; he also has problems dealing with the people at work.



EXERCISE 1 ► Add capital letters where needed in the sentences below.

Example: ^Sshe removed the ugly figurine from the shelf.

1. what is the ideal climate for someone with asthma?
 2. “the editorial staff is still arguing,” she said, “but they rarely agree on anything.”
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3. Our method is quite simple: we make up crazy sentences to help us recall lists of information.
4. Carl's phone number has been changed; we don't know the new one.
5. The author suggests, "opportunities to learn are numerous."

PROPER NOUNS

A proper noun is the name of a specific person, place, or thing. **Capitalize proper nouns.** Following is a list of proper noun categories with examples:

1. *Persons*

John F. Kennedy
James Baldwin
Gloria Steinem

Do not capitalize the names of family relationships unless they substitute for proper names:

I sent flowers to my mother.

She is my aunt.

I took Mother's advice. (*Mother* is used as proper name.)

We spend the summer with Aunt Jean. (*Aunt Jean* is used as a proper name.)

2. *Places*

Cities: Salt Lake City

States: Nebraska

Counties: Washita County

Regions: the Southwest

Continents: North America

Bodies of water: Atlantic Ocean

Parks: Will Rogers Park

Addresses: Willow Street

Geographical sights: Rocky Mountains

General Terms—Not Capitalized

our city

my home state

this county

drive southwest to the corner

on this continent

cool ocean air

walking in the park

on the street

in the mountains

3. *Weekdays, Months, Holidays*

Weekdays: Monday, Tuesday, Saturday

Months: January, May, July

Holidays: Christmas, Memorial Day

Do not capitalize the names of seasons: spring, winter, fall, summer

4. *Historical Events*

Events: World War I

Periods: Middle Ages

Documents: the Constitution

General Terms—Not Capitalized

a long war

an interesting age

a complex document

3. walt whitman is a poet we studied in my english class.
4. Rose served both mexican and chinese dishes at the dinner party.
5. The renaissance is a fascinating period in history.

TITLES OF PUBLICATIONS, WORKS OF ART, AND OTHER WORKS

Titles of publications, works of art, musical compositions, and television and radio programs require capitalization. These titles also require either quotation marks or italics.

Capitalize the titles of works. Capitalize the first word in the title. Capitalize all the words in the title except article adjectives (*a*, *an*, and *the*), prepositions, and conjunctions of fewer than five letters. Look at the following examples:

Book: *The Habit of Being* by Flannery O'Connor
Poem: "The Dead in Europe" by Robert Lowell
Painting: *The Persistence of Memory* by Salvador Dali

Capitalize article adjectives, short prepositions, and conjunctions when they are the first or last word in the title or when they follow a colon or semicolon in the title. Here is an example:

Book: *The Creative Impulse: An Introduction to the Arts* by Dennis J. Sporre



EXERCISE 1 ► Add capital letters where needed in the sentences below.

Example: I have never missed an episode of "M T masterpiece theater" on PBS.

1. The art book covered everything from Bernini's *ecstasy of st. teresa* to Van Gogh's *the starry night*.
2. I like the surrealist painting *the nostalgia of the infinite* by Giorgio de Chirico.
3. The instructor assigned two essays to be read by Friday: "the limitations of language" and "I want a wife."
4. I read the novel *the mosquito coast* before I saw the movie.
5. I enjoyed the poem "housewife's letter: to mary" by Anne Hailey.

TITLES PRECEDING PROPER NAMES

Capitalize titles preceding proper names. Here are some examples:

Capitalize: Doctor Laura Mackie

Do not capitalize: the doctor

Capitalize: Professor Royce Peterson

Do not capitalize: my professor

Capitalize: Rabbi Lowe

Do not capitalize: rabbi from Los Angeles

A title that denotes high rank is capitalized even if it follows the name:

Thomas Jefferson, the President of the United States

or

the President



EXERCISE 1 ► Add capitalization where needed in the sentences below.

Example: I spoke to ^Ddr. Johnson about my problem.

1. The reverend Don Brewer visited my grandfather in the nursing home.
2. We referred our questions to commissioner Weimers of the Department of Public Safety.
3. The photographer took a picture of mayor norris at the arts festival.
4. He watched the president's news conference.
5. I recommend doctor Dautenhahn because she is highly qualified.

TRADE NAMES

Trade names are used to specify individual brands of different products. It is a good idea to refer to a dictionary for current usage when you have a question about capitalizing a trade name.

Capitalize trade names. Look at the following examples:

Ford automobile

Panasonic electric pencil sharpener

Monroe copier

