



CAPITALIZATION

27a Indicate the first word

1. Indicate the first word in a sentence

Capitalization is used for the first word in every sentence.

- **T**raffic signs are sometimes difficult to understand.

2. Indicate the first word in a quotation

Capitalization is also used to indicate the first word in a quotation.

- My brother told the police officer, “**B**ut the sign was covered by a tree branch.”

3. Indicate the first word inside parentheses

Capitalization is used when a full sentence is placed within parentheses. If the parenthetical statement is inserted into another sentence, do not capitalize.

- My brother told the officer that the sign was covered by a tree branch. (**H**owever, it wasn't.)
- My brother told the officer (**f**rom our father's precinct) that the sign was covered by a tree branch.
- My brother told the officer (**t**he officer was from our father's precinct) that the sign was covered by a tree branch.

4. Indicate the first word in a sentence following a colon

Capitalization after a colon is optional; however, capitalize the first word after a colon if you want to emphasize the sentence.

- ➔ My brother has had several tickets: **he** has been caught driving with a broken headlight, driving too fast in a school zone, and not stopping for a pedestrian in the crosswalk.
- ➔ The police officer voided the ticket: **He** was from our father's precinct.

27b

Indicate proper nouns and proper adjectives

Capitalization is used to indicate proper nouns and proper adjectives.

1. Indicate proper nouns

Proper nouns name specific people, places, things, or ideas. For more information on proper nouns, see **2b**.

People ➔ Abigail Breslin, Joaquin Phoenix, Aunt Joan, Uncle Ralph, Senator Jones, Reverend Smith, Dr. Black, Chief Johnson, Professor White

Places ➔ Europe, Australia, Alaska, Washington, D.C., the South, the Northeast, the Mississippi River, the Grand Canyon, New York City, United States

Organizations, governmental institutions, and academic institutions ➔ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Labor, the United Nations, Long Beach City College, Harvard University

Abbreviations of titles and organizations ➔ AAA, FBI, MD, MLA, PhD, UN, UCLA

Monuments and buildings ➔ the Washington Monument, the Willis Tower, the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower



Languages → Chinese, English, Arabic, Swahili, Spanish, French, Japanese, Russian, Mandarin, American Sign Language

Races → American Indian, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, African American, Black, White, Asian

Nationalities → Spanish, Ethiopian, Arabic, Chinese, South African, Greek, American

Religions and religious terms → Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Shinto, Protestant, Catholic, Baptist, Buddha, Mohammed, God, Jesus, Moses, Talmud, Bible, Koran, Allah, Jehovah, Genesis

Course titles → English 101, Biology 1001, French 300, English Composition 101, Modern War Ethics, An Introduction to Computer History

Days and months → January, March, May, Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday

2. Indicate proper adjectives

Capitalization is also used for proper adjectives, which are usually derived from proper nouns and can be found inside a proper noun phrase.

→ Chinese food, English language, Spanish eyes

27c

Indicate titles and subtitles

Capitalization is used for titles of books, stories, plays, poems, songs, articles, films, newspapers, magazines, works of art, musical compositions, and photographs. Always capitalize the first word in the title, no matter the type of word. Also, if using MLA (Modern Language Association) style, capitalize all other words in the title or subtitle except for articles (*a, an, the*), conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*), and short prepositions (*in, on, for, to*). If using another style, such as from the APA (American Psychological Association), be sure to check specific guidelines.

Books → *The World According to Garp*

Books with subtitles → *Chinese Astrology: Exploring the Eastern Zodiac*

- Short stories → “Everyday Use”
 Plays → *Hamlet*
 Poems → “Casey at Bat”
 Songs → “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer”
 Articles → “Fifty Ways to Avoid the Flu”
 Films → *Moulin Rouge*
 Newspapers → *The New York Times*
 Magazines and journals → *Vogue*,
English Journal
 Works of art → *Starry Night*
 Musical compositions → *Romeo et Juliette*
 Photographs → *The Kiss*
 Vessels → *Spruce Goose*, *Queen Mary*



VJ Day, The Kiss, New York 1945
 Gelatin Silver by Alfred Eisenstaedt
 © Time Inc.

27d

Indicate acronyms

Acronyms are made up of the first letter of each word in a phrase. For instance, *FBI* is the acronym for “Federal Bureau of Investigation.” Acronyms are usually capitalized except for those that have become regular words such as *scuba*, *laser*, and *radar*.

Acronyms → CBS, CEO, CIA, FAQ, SAT, USA, WGN

DID YOU KNOW?

The official name for the Roman Empire, long before the Christian era, was SPQR, an acronym that means *Senatus Populusque Romanus* or “the Senate and the People of Rome.”



EXERCISE 1

Directions: Capitalize where needed.

1. when I visited china and the great wall, I had two books in my backpack: *the signs of life in the universe* and *life after school*.
2. i learned quite quickly that I should have been carrying a chinese-english dictionary.
3. people often asked me on my asian trip whether i was canadian, australian, or american.
4. while visiting monasteries, my brother alex and i learned about buddha and buddhism (and also lao tse and taoism).
5. we also learned that the people's republic of china (the prc) and the republic of china (roc) are considered two different countries (china and taiwan, respectively) by all countries except for the prc.

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