

Capitalization Rules

1. Use a capital letter to begin every sentence.

Do not use a figure (for example, 1, or \$5.5 million) to begin a sentence. If you must begin a sentence with a number, spell the number out (one, five-and-a-half million dollars).

Seven people came.

NOT: 7 people came.

Ten thousand dollars is missing.

NOT: \$10,000 is missing.

2. Use a capital letter to begin a direct quotation that is a complete sentence.

This rule applies even when the quotation begins in the middle of a sentence.

"Come as quickly as you can," he said.
He said, "Come as quickly as you can."
"Come as quickly as you can," he said, "and don't be late."

NOTE: The word "and" is not capitalized because it is part of the sentence that begins with "Come."

Do not use a capital letter to begin an indirect quotation.

He told us to come as quickly as we could.
He said that we should come as quickly as we could.

3. Capitalize the pronoun "I," but not "me," "my," "myself," or "mine"

The book I found on the desk is not mine.

4. Capitalize proper names, people, and titles when they precede a person's name.

Educational degree abbreviations following a person's name are *a/ways* capitalized.

Dr. Marian Harvey or Marian Harvey, M.D. or Marian Harvey, Ph.D.
Mr. John Smith or John Smith, M.A.
Mrs. Arthur Moore
Mr. John Brown
Miss Anne Martin (NOTE: There is no period after "Miss.")
Sir Henry Thornton
Governor Johnston
Aunt Mary and Uncle George
Professor Jones
Major Cummings
Alexander the Great (NOTE: The word "the" is not capitalized.)
The Elizabethan Age
a Christian Civilization
Buddhist Philosophy

Titles are capitalized only when they refer to specific people and come immediately before the person's name, not when they refer to one of many.

He is a professor at the university. (He is one of many professors.)
She is a major in the army. (She is one of many majors in the army.)

4. Capitalize proper names, people, and titles... (continued)

Titles of relationship are capitalized when a specific person is being spoken to or is referred to by title.

Aren't you listening, Mother?
Has Father come home yet?

Titles of relationship are not capitalized when a personal pronoun comes before them.

Have you seen my aunt?
I wrote a letter to my mother yesterday.

Geographical names and words formed from them are capitalized.

Paris, France Bombay, India Accra, Ghana Montréal, Canada Asia Jackson, Mississippi the United States the United Kingdom	French culture Indian food African-Americans Canadian students Asian Studies (or Asia Studies) the Mississippi River U.S. Foreign policy British Foreign policy
---	--

NOTE: The word "the" is rarely capitalized before geographical names. An exception: The Hague.

Titles of books, magazines, articles, short stories, plays, compositions, movies, television shows, and music are capitalized. Do not capitalize articles, conjunctions, or short prepositions unless they function as the first word in the title.

<i>A Dictionary of Musical Terms</i> <i>Gone with the Wind</i> (novel) <i>Time</i> (magazine) <i>The New York Times</i> (newspaper)	"The Lottery" (short story) "A New Look at Old Age" (article) <i>Jurassic Park</i> (movie) <i>The marriage of Figaro</i> (opera)
--	---

Remember that works published separately are italicized in print or when produced on a word processor; however, they are not underlined when handwritten. Exception: names of religious texts are capitalized but not italicized or underlined. For example: the Bible, the Torah, the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Rig Veda, the Upanisads, the Koran, the Tipitaka, the Talmud.

Names of particular college courses are capitalized, but not the discipline (unless it is a language).

He is taking History 101.
Many colleges require students to take a course in English or American literature.

NOTE: Here, "American" is capitalized because it comes from "America," but literature is not capitalized because it is not the name of a specific course.

She is writing a paper for her world history course.
Arthur is taking Chemistry III this quarter.
Have you registered for Math 205?

4. Capitalize proper names, people, and titles... (continued)

Names of the deity, religions, and religious bodies are capitalized.

Christian / Christianity Jewish / Judaism Islamic / Islam or Muslim / Islam Hindu / Hinduism God	The First Baptist Church Mormon St. John's Lutheran Church Protestant Allah
--	---

NOTE: Do not capitalize the word "god" when referring to gods of ancient mythology. For example, "The god Zeus transformed himself into a swan in order to achieve his rather sordid aims."

Dates, including months, days of the week, holidays, and historic periods and events, should be capitalized.

January, February, March Sunday, Monday, Tuesday New Year's Day Thanksgiving	Easter Passover the Middle Ages the Civil War
---	--

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

Names of the planets and stars are capitalized.

Jupiter Mars Saturn	Venus Sirius the Pleiades
---------------------------	---------------------------------

NOTE: Do not capitalize the word "earth" when referring to ground or dirt; do not capitalize moon or sun.

5. Capitalize the first letter of a line of poetry

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky,
 I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

6. Capitalize the first word of every point in an outline

Products of North America

- I. Plant products
 - A. Food
 - 1. Grain
 - 2. Vegetables
 - 3. Fruit
 - B. Non-food
 - 1. Lumber
 - 2. Cotton
 - 3. Tobacco

- II. Mineral Products
 - A. Metals
 - 1. Iron
 - 2. Copper
 - 3. Silver
 - 4. Gold
 - B. Fuels
 - 1. Petroleum
 - 2. Coal

7. Points of the compass

Points of the compass should be capitalized only when they refer to recognized specific regions or are part of a proper name. Do not capitalize them when they indicate a direction.

They are attending school in the **South**.
 The **Northeast** has severe storm warnings tonight.
 Miss Collins is an expert on the **Middle East**.
 Mr. and Mrs. Adams go **south** every winter to avoid the cold weather.
 Canada is **north** of the United States, and Mexico is **south** of it.
 North Dakota and South Dakota are **west** of Minnesota.
 The copying machines are along the **north** wall of the library.
 When you come to the next corner, turn left and then drive **east** for two miles.

In compound directional words, “north” and “south” always come first when the word has two parts.

The wind is out of the **northeast**.
 Many people like the dry climate of the **Southwest**.

8. Prefixes and proper names

Treatment of prefixes with proper names is not consistent. Look in a dictionary or style manual to be sure of capitals and hyphens.

antichrist
 transatlantic
 subarctic
 Precambrian
 Pre-Christian
 Pre-Raphaelite
 Pre-Socratic

anti-Semite
 post-World War II
 postimpressionism
 post-Pleistocene
 pro-American
 premedical
 pre-engineering