Capitalization

First Words
Capitalize the first word of every sentence—even in emails.
Do not feed the alligator.
Professor Smith, I have a question.

Direct Quotations or Dialogue
Capitalize the first word of a quotation, even if it occurs in the middle of another sentence.
As Mark Twain once said, “Nothing so needs reforming as other people’s habits.”

Do not capitalize the first word if the quotation is the completion of a previously started sentence.
“Nothing so needs reforming,” Mark Twain once said, “as other people’s habits.”

Major Words in Titles
Capitalize the first words of titles and all nouns and verbs. Do not capitalize “the” or prepositions if they occur mid-title.
Where the Red Fern Grows
“Ode on a Grecian Urn”

Countries, Languages, Nationalities
Spain
French
English history and American literature

Racial and Ethnic Groups
Do not capitalize the general categories of “black” and “white” (Not all guides agree on this point).
Asian
Native-American
white Europeans
black Americans

Names and Titles
Capitalize titles when used in place of a person’s name or when attached to a person’s name.
Have you talked to Mom yet?
Let’s invite Aunt Jane for dinner.
In history today, Professor Smith was late.

Do not capitalize titles when not acting as a name or when not associated with a specific person’s name.
To test if a title is acting as a name, replace it with your name. For example, “I talked to Mom” would make sense as “I talked to Josh [your name]” But “I talked to my mom” could not be “I talked to my Josh.” Since it sounds awkward with a name replacing the title, you know it is not acting as a name and should not be capitalized.
I invited my aunt to dinner.
The history professor was late for class.

Academic Subjects
Capitalize academic subjects only when their names are based on countries or languages, or when they indicate a specific class, not just a general subject.
Have you taken Psychology 201?
I like my American literature class.
I am not a fan of history.
I wish I had a better time slot for Science 101.

Proper Nouns
Capitalize the names of specific companies, brands, and institutions.
General Electric
Boeing
Republican Party
American Civil Liberties Union

Religion
Capitalize specific religions or names of deity. General references like “the gods” are not capitalized. (Some styles also capitalize pronouns that refer to deity.)
I am Catholic, and he is Mormon.
Are you Christian?
Buddha had some really good ideas.
God loves you and me.
I believe in Jesus Christ and His teachings.

Dates
Capitalize days of the week, months, and holidays. Do not capitalize seasons. (Capital what is found on a calendar.)
Monday
March
Christmas
winter, spring, summer, and fall

Locations
Capitalize the names of specific locations, cities, and street names. Do not capitalize general directions.
Madison Hospital
Elm Street
Rocky Mountains
I live in the South. (as a location)
I turned west. (as a direction)