

CAPITALIZATION

FIRST WORDS

Capitalize the first word of every sentence—even in emails.

Examples:

Do not feed the alligator.

Professor Smith, I have a question.

DIRECT QUOTATIONS OR DIALOGUE

Capitalize the first word of every quotation, even if it occurs in the middle of another sentence.

Example: 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.

Example: “Nothing so needs reforming,” Mark Twain once said, “as other people’s habits.”

MAJOR WORDS IN TITLES

Capitalize the first word in titles and all nouns and verbs. Do not capitalize “the” or prepositions if they occur mid-title

Examples:

Where the Red Fern Grows

“Ode on a Grecian Urn”

COUNTRIES, LANGUAGES & NATIONALITIES

Capitalize all languages, countries, and nationalities

Examples:

Spain, France, English, Korean

RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS

Capitalize racial and ethnic groups. Do not capitalize the general categories of “black” or “white” (not all guides agree on this point).

Examples:

Asian

Native-American

white Americans

black Americans

NAMES AND TITLES

Capitalize titles when used in place of a person’s name or when attached to a person’s name.

Examples:

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 Selene [your name]” But “I talked to my mom” could not be “I talked to my Selene.”

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.

Examples:

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.

Examples:

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.)

Examples:

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. (*Capitalize what is found on a calendar.*)

Examples:

Monday

March

Christmas

Do Not Capitalize:

winter, spring, summer, and fall

LOCATIONS

Capitalize the names of specific locations, cities, and street names. Do not capitalize general directions.

Examples:

Madison Hospital

Elm Street

Rocky Mountains

I live in the South. (as a location)

I turned west. (as a direction)