

Capitalization

Abbreviations:

Capitalize the letters in abbreviations if the word abbreviated would normally be capitalized:

Federal Bureau of Investigation—FBI

Housing and Urban Development—HUD

Monday—Mon.

Boulevard—Blvd.

After a Colon:

Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun.

three names The new parents considered the following
for their baby boy: Robert, John, and Anthony.

Capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a complete sentence:

the following to After three weeks in Central America, he had
broken windshield, a show for his diplomatic efforts: He had a
weavings. sunburn, a depleted wallet, and some colorful

the following to -BUT-
windshield, a After three weeks in Central America, he had
weavings. show for his diplomatic efforts: a broken
sunburn, a depleted wallet, and some colorful

Compass Points:

Capitalize the points of the compass when they refer to specific places:

the South, back East, the Midwest

Capitalize the points of the compass when they refer to global divisions (not states):

Southern Europe
-BUT-
eastern Montana

Do not capitalize the points of the compass when they refer to direction:

south of here, farther north

Do not capitalize the points of the compass when they are used adjectivally:

western clothing, southwest wind

General:

Always capitalize the following:

1. The first letter of a sentence:

Television news coverage is seldom comprehensive.

2. Official titles when combined with the name of the holder:

President George Bush

3. The first letter of the important words in literary titles:

The Grapes of Wrath

4. Nations, states, counties, cities:

United States, Minnesota, Stevens County,
Minneapolis

5. Days of the week, months, holidays:

Tuesday, January, Christmas

6. Major historical events and periods:

Dark Ages, Great Depression

7. Schools, political parties, businesses:

University of California, Republican Party,

Pacific Telephone Company

8. People's names and initials:

John B. Davis

9. Proper names of geographic features; lakes, rivers, mountains,
etc:

Lake Tahoe, Mississippi River, Rocky
Mountains

10. Nationalities and other proper noun group memberships:

Swedish, Irish
New Yorker, Martian
Democrat, Hoosier
Arkansas Razorback

-BUT-

San Diego resident
native Alaskan

11. Names of deities:

God, Buddha, Siva

Holidays:

Capitalize all holidays and religious days:

Memorial Day, All Saints Day

Outlines:

Capitalize the first word of each item in an outline:

1. Preparing the soil

2. Planting the seeds
3. Irrigating
4. Harvesting

Parentheses:

Capitalize the first word of a parenthetical statement only if it is a proper noun or begins a complete sentence:

arguing. (They
It made no sense for them to continue
were certainly not resolving anything.)

-BUT-

Brussels.
The train (a monorail) arrived early in

Poetry:

Capitalize the first word in each line of poetry:

My heart so full it overflows in sonnets
Pray thee, Fair Maid, don't tread upon it

NOTE: In modern verse, this and all other rules are often ignored.

Prefixes:

Foreign name prefixes-such as d', da, van, and von-are usually capitalized when not preceded by a name or title:

D' Meres, but Johnny d'Meres

Von Stufalt, but Baron von Stufalt

American or British name prefixes are usually capitalized regardless of precedent:

Van Pelt, also Dolores Van Pelt

NOTE: Discovering individuals' preferential spelling of their own names is the only safe method.

Proper Names and Titles:

Capitalize all proper names:

Joe's Diner, San Diego, Elizabeth Barklay

Capitalize words combined with or substituted for proper names to form titles:

Ivan the Terrible, the Sunshine State

the Great Gatsby, Nader's Raiders

Capitalize official titles and academic degrees when they are used with the name of the holder:

President Truman; Ron Hill, Ph.D.

Reverend Jesse Jackson, Dr. Greaves

Senator Cranston, Mayor Moore

Mister Jones, Lady Jane

Capitalize a title when it is used without the name, when it is used in direct address, or when it definitely refers to a certain person:

wrong. I'm telling you, Doctor, there is something

The Mayor is coming.

Capitalize family terms when they are used with the name to which they apply, or when they refer to a specific family member:

Daddy. Aunt Jane, Uncle Albert, My heart belongs to

But do not capitalize family terms which follow a possessive pronoun:

My mother is coming along for the ride.

Capitalize family terms when they are used in direct address:

If I didn't care, Mother, I wouldn't mention it.

Do not capitalize family terms when they are used in the generic sense:

He had a face only a mother could love.

Capitalize the important words in literary titles:

The Fall of the House of Usher

Mating Behavior of Cephalopods

Quotations:

Capitalize the first word of a complete quotation:

She asked, "Where is my briefcase?"

Do not capitalize the resumed portion of a quoted sentence:

this "There is no point," she said, "in continuing
discussion."

Seasons:

Capitalize the names of the seasons of the year if they are personified:

Hurry, sweet Summer, we need you.

-BUT-

I can hardly wait for this summer.