

## **CAPITAL LETTERS are used according to the following guidelines:**

### **The first word in a sentence or a direct quotation is always capitalized.**

The panhandler touched my coat sleeve. Then he asked, “**Buddy**, can you spare some change?”

“If you want a ride,” said Tawnee, “get ready now. **Otherwise**, you are staying home!”

“Try an orange-raspberry sherbet waffle cone,” the ice cream seller suggested to the little girl.

Puppies are my favorite pets; kittens are my next favorite.

**Note:** Words after a semicolon are not usually capitalized.

### **Always capitalize the pronoun *I*, even in contractions.**

I’m not sure what **I** did to offend you, but I’ll sincerely try to make it up to you; **I** promise.

I don’t care for Mei Ling’s husband although I am very fond of her.

### **Proper nouns [A proper noun names a **specific** person, place, or thing.] are always capitalized.**

Last weekend **George** and **Lola Morrison** met **Tony** and **Tina Curry** at the **Fargone State College** and **Toolate University** football game in **Metropolis, Georgia**.

After the game, the four friends went to eat dinner at **Alexander’s Steak House** in **Owensburg**. Then, they went to the **Holiday Inn** to spend the night.

The next morning, after eating breakfast in a small café located at **357 West Main Street**, just around the corner from the motel, they all went to church at **St. John’s Catholic Church**. After church, they shopped at **Jewel’s Boutique** and some other small gift shops, ate lunch in the university’s cafeteria, and drove home in their **General Motors** vehicles.

**Note:** Use small letters if the specific name of a person, place, or thing is not given or named.

### **Capitalize names of commercial products/brand names.**

Clyde uses **Scope** mouthwash, **Certs** mints, and **Dentyne** chewing gum to drive away the bad breath caused by the **Marlboro** cigarettes and **White Owl** cigars that he always smokes.

My sister likes to play board games like **Monopoly**, **Scrabble**, and **Sorry**; I like poker and other card games; my brother likes active games like baseball, basketball, and soccer.

**Wilber** likes to shop at the **Sears** store and **Radio Shack** whenever he wants to buy name-brand shop tools and electronic equipment. **Joan** shops at area discount stores and resale shops.

Whenever I have a cold, I prefer to use lotion-filled **Puffs** tissues for my sniffles rather than a scratchy generic brand. I also like to drink steaming hot cocoa and have **Campbell’s** tomato soup to help soothe my sore throat.

**Note:** Use small letters for the type/kind of the product.

**Names of days of the week, months, and holidays begin with a capital letter.**

Tuesday	December	Christmas
Sunday	July	Independence Day

Thanksgiving is always on the fourth Thursday of November.

Mother's Day is celebrated on a Sunday in the month of May.

**Note:** Do not capitalize the seasons – spring, summer, fall, winter.

My children love fall and winter because their favorite holidays take place then.

The spring semester begins during the coldest part of the year.

**Capitalize the names of specific organizations such as government agencies, educational institutions, businesses, associations, unions, clubs, and civic religious and political groups when the actual name is used in the sentence.**

Mothers Against Drunk Driving	Democratic Party
Postal Clerks' Union	American Automobile Association
Lutheran	Boy Scouts of America
Saturday Night Poker Club	Republican Party
Catholicism	Methodists
Elk's Club	Young Men's Christian Association
American Association of Retired Persons	National Broadcasting Corporation

Because of the upcoming election, the Democratic and Republican Parties are holding many debates between the candidates. There are only two really strong political parties here in the United States.

**Titles of books, magazines, newspapers, articles, stories, poems, films, television show, stage play, songs, and papers that students write are capitalized.**

<u>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</u>	a book
<u>Good Housekeeping</u>	a magazine
<u>New York Times</u>	a newspaper
"Thinking about a Change in Your Career"	an article
"The Yellow Wallpaper"	a short story
"Some Moments Alone" and <u>The Waste Land</u>	two poems
<u>Sudden Impact</u>	a movie/video
<u>60 Minutes</u>	a television show
<u>Fiddler on the Roof</u>	a stage play
"Abbey Road"	a song
Uses of the Internet for Research	a title of a student's essay

**Note:** Articles (*a*, *an*, and *the*), short prepositions (such as *of* and *to*), and coordinating Conjunctions (such as *and* and *but*) are not capitalized unless they are the first or last word of the title.

**Names that show family relationships are capitalized.** However, do not capitalize those family relationship words when they come after possessive words such as *my, his, her, our, their, or your*.

Go help **Grandfather** carry those heavy bags from the car. Your grandpa, who is 95, is not a very strong man.

I got **Mother** to baby-sit for me. My mother is my baby's sitter.

Phil is staying at Uncle Raymond and Aunt Mary's house during his summer vacation. His uncle and aunt are looking forward to his visit.

My grandmother lives next door to your mother and father. **Mother** and **Father** live next door to **Grandmother Lewis**.

**Capitalize a title or rank ONLY when used with a name.**

Professor Joe Smith	BUT NOT	any professor
Dr. Serge E. Calley		any doctor
Senator George Wilson		any senator
Mayor Karen Hasara		any mayor
General Colin Powell		any general
Congresswoman Clinton		any congresswoman

Mayor Anderson spoke to Officer Jenkins and First Lieutenant Long after the burglary.

Ethan Brown, Jr., Representative Ray Black, and Professor Irma Stone will speak at the student forum this evening.

Dr. Jones sent me to Chairman Rush, who sent me to see Dean Head.

**Note:** If you can put the word *any* in front of the noun, you can be sure that the noun should not be capitalized. Do not capitalize a title that is not used as part of a person's name.

Irma Stone, professor of education, will speak at the meeting this evening.

Many people hold our representatives and senators in high respect; others do not.

The instructor sent me to see the committee chairman, who sent me to see the college dean.

My brother drove me to the doctor's office after a stray dog bit me.

**Capitalize specific school courses and all languages.**

This semester, I am taking **Dance 101**, **Introduction to Psychology**, and **Economics 425**. I think that I will take **Composition 111**, **German**, and **History of Western Civilization** next semester.

**Note:** The names of general subject areas are not capitalized.

Jody is taking a gym class, psychology, and an economics class this semester; next semester it'll be writing, language, and history classes.

### **All languages are capitalized.**

Shawnea knows German, Spanish, Italian, and French, but she usually speaks in American slang.

My friend's Polish accent makes his English difficult to understand.

### **Geographic locations are capitalized.**

I grew up in the Midwest. I worked in the East for a number of years and then moved to the West Coast for two years before finally settling in the South .

**Note:** Use small letters for directions.

To reach Chicago, you must drive north on Interstate 55.

A new high school gymnasium is being built at the south end of the football field.

Because I cannot tell east from west or north from south, I always keep a compass with me at all times.

### **Historical periods, well-known events, and documents are capitalized.**

During the Middle Ages, only the upper class and members of the clergy could read and write.

The act of protest in which 342 tea chests were thrown into the ocean came to be known as the Boston Tea Party.

The Magna Carta, the charter of English liberties, was granted in 1215.

Horace did well on the history test questions regarding the Second World War, but he couldn't answer one question about the Great Depression.

### **Capitalize races, nations, and nationalities.**

The questionnaire asked if the head of our household was Caucasian, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American.

Karol, who is Polish, lives in the Soviet Union and can speak many languages.

Denise's beautiful features reflect her Chinese and Mexican heritage.

**Opening and closing of a letter** -- Capitalize all words in the salutation (opening) of a letter, but capitalize only the first word of the closing of a letter.

Dear Sir or Madam:	Dear Ms. Smith,	Dear John,
Sincerely yours,	Yours truly,	Very truly yours,

**Capitalize proper adjectives.** (Proper adjectives are made from proper nouns).

French toast	Norway maple	Texas cake
Rocky Mountain spotted fever		Labrador retriever
Italian cruise ship		Canadian provinces

**Abbreviations** -- Capitalize radio and television station call letters and abbreviations for departments and agencies of national and international government, other organizations, and corporations. Also capitalize certain acronyms (words formed from the initials of a name) and abbreviations that indicate time.

EPA	FBI	OPEC	IBM	WFMB-AM	WICS-TV
NAACP	NATO	ASPCA	FAA		
OSHA	A.M. or P.M.	BC or AD	FDIC	KNBC-TV	

**Names for the deity, religions, religious followers, and sacred books are capitalized**

There are various names for **God**, including the **Almighty**, **Jehovah**, and **Allah**.

The native religion of Japan is **Shintoism**.

The **Koran** is the sacred text of **Islam**; the **Bible** is the same for **Christianity**.