

# CAPITALIZATION

## ■ Capitalize beginnings

Capitalize the first word of every sentence.

The cat scratched the dog. Why didn't he just run away?

## ■ Capitalize names

Capitalize proper nouns, proper adjectives, and words used as essential parts of proper nouns. When you can recognize the difference between proper nouns and adjectives and common or generic ones, you'll have little trouble deciding when to capitalize. Proper nouns name **specific** persons, places, or things. Proper adjectives are formed from proper nouns.

Steve Carell, Sonia Sotomayor

Specific persons, not just any comedian or judge.

the Liberty Bell, the Hope Diamond

Specific things, not just any bell or jewel.

Pocatello, the Snake River

Specific places, not just any city or river.

the South; New England; the Intermountain West

Specific geographic regions, not just any place south or northeast of here.

Boy Scouts of America, New York Yankees.

Specific organizations, associations, Government departments.

Gatorade, Subaru Outback

Brand names, trademarks, not just any product.

Chinese, Mexican-American, Arabic.

Ethnic origins, nationalities and languages.

Wednesday, Mother's Day

Days of the week and holidays.

the Constitution, World War II.  
the Civil Rights Movement,

Historical events, documents, periods, movements.

## ■ Capitalize words that substitute for or are parts of names

Capitalize the titles of relatives when they substitute for or form part of proper names, but not otherwise.

I hugged Aunt Maria and Uncle Luis.

"Aunt Maria" is the name I call this person, just like the name "Diana."

My aunt is Maria and my uncle is Luis.

"Aunt" is a relationship or role here, like "teacher" or "plumber," not a name.

Grandpa helped with my homework.

"Grandpa" is the name I call this person, just like the names "Sonia" or "Tony."

My grandfather helped with my homework.

"Grandfather" is a relationship here, like "sister" or "neighbor," not a name.

Capitalize professional or royal titles when they substitute for or are part of proper names, but not otherwise.

Secretary of State Rice addressed us.  
The secretary of state, Dr. Rice, spoke.  
President Bush was here yesterday.  
He greeted the President's plane.  
He was elected president of his class.

the title appears as part of Rice's name  
the title appears separately  
the title appears as part of Bush's name  
the title substitutes for Bush's name  
the title appears separately

Capitalize points of the compass when they substitute for proper names (by reference to actual regions) but not when they refer to directions.

People living in the East thought anything west of Pittsburgh was wilderness.  
Take the southern route for an interesting drive through the Midwest.

Capitalize academic subjects when they substitute for proper names (as in catalogue listings) or contain proper nouns or adjectives (such as the name of a foreign language or religion).

I'm taking math, geology, and Latin.

Latin is the proper name of a language, but the first two are just ordinary nouns.

I'm taking Math 1108 and Geology 1100.

These are the official names of the courses in the catalogue.

## ■ Capitalize titles

Capitalize the titles of books, magazines, newspapers, scholarly journals, movies, television shows, songs, poems, short stories, plays.

Always capitalize a title's first and last words; within the title, capitalize each word except short prepositions, conjunctions and articles. Notice that the titles of longer works, like books and movies, are italicized. They can usually be bought or handled by themselves.

*The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*  
*No Man is an Island*

Titles of shorter works like poems, songs, and newspaper articles are placed in quotation marks.

They're typically found inside other sources like anthologies, albums, or newspapers.

"A Rose for Emily"  
"With or Without You"

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