



WRITING CENTRE

Capitalizing the first letter of a word indicates the word is being used in a special way. Here are guidelines which will help you capitalize correctly.

CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD OF A SENTENCE AND THE PRONOUN "I" IN ANY LOCATION

The agency bought a computer, and I learned how to use it.

NOTE: The first word of a main clause following a colon MAY be capitalized for emphasis.

The decision of the council was this: Taxes will be increased.

CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD IN A QUOTATION

Mr. Smith exclaimed, "That's not my suitcase!"

CAPITALIZE THE FIRST WORD AND ALL TITLES AND NOUNS IN THE SALUTATION OF A LETTER AND THE FIRST WORD IN THE COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE.

Dear Miranda,

Sincerely yours

CAPITALIZE THE NAMES OF THE DAYS OF THE WEEK, SPECIAL DAYS (HOLIDAYS), MONTHS OF THE YEAR, HISTORIC EVENTS, AND ERAS

Tuesday, Halloween, French Revolution, December, Jurassic Era

CAPITALIZE THE FIRST, LAST, AND ALL OTHER IMPORTANT WORDS IN THE TITLES OF WRITTEN WORKS (documents, books, journals, newspapers, reports) AND THEIR CONTENTS (chapters, sections, articles), WORKS OF ART AND MUSIC, AND MOVIES

NOTE: Capitalize articles (a, an, the), conjunctions, or prepositions only when they are the first or last words in a title or subtitle.

Independence Day, A Day at the Races, A Farewell to Arms

CAPITALIZE NOUNS AND ABBREVIATIONS REFERRING TO PARTS OF A WRITTEN WORK ONLY WHEN THE REFERENCE IS FOLLOWED BY A NUMBER

Book IX, Chapter 6, Section 2, Volume III

CAPITALIZE WORDS REFERRING TO THE DEITY AND A SPECIFIC RELIGION

Zeus, Buddhism, Christian, Allah

CAPITALIZE TITLES IN THREE INSTANCES:

INSTANCE 1: when immediately preceding a name

Dr. Carl Bell, Miss Dorothy Brosnan, Uncle John, Sergeant O' Keefe

INSTANCE 2: after a name in an address of typed signature

*Ms. Maria Richards, Director of Personnel
Marvin J. Feldman, Manager*

INSTANCE 2: used in the place of a person's name

"I disagree with you, Officer," replied the criminal.

CAPITALIZE THE SPECIFIC NAMES OF THE FOLLOWING...

Geographical sites & places: *Rocky Mountains, Lake Superior, Austin, Texas*

Regions: *the Midwest, the South, the Middle East*

Organizations: *Microsoft, Oxfam, Starbucks*

Buildings: *Empire State Building, Waterfront Station*

Works of engineering: *the Eiffel Tower, the Great Wall of China, Jefferson Memorial*

State abbreviations: *IL, OH, UT, CA, WI, MI*

CAPITALIZE WORDS BASED ON NATIONALITIES OR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Alaskan, Canadians, Mexican, Chinese, New Yorker, Indian, Midwesterner, Californian

CAPITALIZE THE NAME BRAND BUT NOT THE GENERIC PRODUCT'S NAME

Mercedes-Benz automobiles, Reebok tennis shoes, Apple personal computers

CAPITALIZE THE NAMES OF SPECIFIC COURSES (usually followed by a number) BUT NOT THOSE OF GENERAL AREAS OF STUDY (except languages)

Ben's record includes many business, mathematics, and political science courses; he is now studying Danish and Psychology 234.