

Rules for Capitalization

Here are the main ideas to remember about capitalization:

Always capitalize:

1. The first letter of the first word in a new sentence.
2. The pronoun *I*
3. The name *America*, *Americans*, *United States*, and *United States of America*
4. The name *English* (and the names of all other languages like French, German, Italian, Spanish, and so on)
5. All words in a title except for small prepositions like *in*, *by*, *for*, *to*, *at*, and the words *the*, *a* and *an*.

Almost everything else you need to know about capitalization is included in this little rule: Capitalize anything that is the **exact, precise, formal, proper** NAME or TITLE of something.

Here are some more specifics:

Do Capitalize

NAMES of the days of the week

NAMES of the months

NAMES of formal holidays
(Halloween, Thanksgiving, Father's Day,
Valentine's Day, etc.)

NAMES of the planets

NAMES of formal religions
(Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Buddhist)

NAMES of school course with numbers
behind them (Sociology 102, Math 205)

Titles followed by NAMES:
Dr. Johnson, Pres. Wilson, Mr. Cotter

The terms "North, South, East, and West"
when referring to sections of our country.
(Last year I visited many states in the West.)
The North defeated the South in the Civil
War.)

Don't Capitalize

School subjects without numbers
(Tom liked biology but hated algebra)

Names of seasons (spring, summer, winter,
fall, autumn)

Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior

Words used as directions of the compass
(Carterville is east of Carbondale but west of
Marion)

Colors used to refer to racial groups (One
black man and two white men were on the
committee.)

Do not capitalize certain words or terms just
because they refer to something noble or
important or honorable.

- government
- mother
- freedom
- religion

Additional Capitalization Information

Religion

God (He, Him, Lord, Man Upstairs, the Creator)
Holy Spirit
the Father
the Son
The Ten Commandments
Jesus Christ
Christ
the Bible

Politics

the Senate (but not senators)
the House of Representative
the Capitol
Declaration of Independence
Supreme Court
the Constitution

Product Names

Capitalize the **brand name** but not the general word for what the product is.

Crest toothpaste	Green Giant peas
Kellogg's corn flakes	Campbell's soup
Duncan Hines cake mix	McDonald's hamburgers

Geographic Features

Capitalize **both** the **proper name** and the **general word** for what the feature is.

Rocky Mountains	Carlsbad Caverns
Atlantic Ocean	Teton Mountains
Great Salt Lake	Mississippi River