

## Capitalization

Capitalization of words can often be tricky and confusing. A good rule of thumb is that words are capitalized if they are unique persons, places, or things, or if, in a title, they are important. Of course, all sentences begin with a capital letter, as well.

Proper nouns and proper adjectives are always capitalized. They fall most often into the following categories:

Category	Example	Notes
Particular people	<b>Eleanor Roosevelt</b> <b>Confucius</b>	
Organizations	<b>United Nations</b> <b>Yellowstone National Park</b>	
Calendar names: • Days of the week • Months of the year • Holidays • NOT seasons	<b>Monday, Tuesday</b> <b>January, March</b> <b>Martin Luther King Day</b> winter, spring, summer	
Geographical names	<b>Bay of Biscay</b> <b>Nile River</b> <b>New York State</b> <b>Boston</b>	
Building names	<b>Empire State Building</b> <b>Sears Tower</b>	
Directions which refer to a region, not a way to go	Maine is in the <b>Northeast</b> Drive <b>northeast</b> on the old highway.	Often regions which should be capitalized are preceded by "the."
Group names • Political parties • Religious sects • Nations • Ethnic origin groups	<b>Republicans</b> <b>Presbyterians</b> <b>Nigeria</b> <b>Bulgarian</b>	
Government body and department names	the <b>Senate</b> <b>Department of Education</b>	The "little words," like "of" are not capitalized
Historic names • Events • Periods • Documents	<b>American Revolution</b> <b>Age of Innocence</b> <b>Magna Carta</b>	
Titles • Titles before proper names • High government titles without names • College degrees • NOT most titles without names	<b>Captain Hook</b> <b>President of the United States</b>  <b>Bachelor of Arts degree</b> a group of <b>representatives</b>	
Words of family relationship • Family names when used as specific person's name • Relationship names when	The cake belongs to <b>Dad</b> .  My <b>Uncle Bill</b> is a fireman.	

used before a proper name • NOT relationship names not naming a person	Her <b>a</b> unt works at the elementary school	
Solar system names • Planets • Stars • Satellites • Not sun, earth, and moon, usually	<b>M</b> ars, <b>V</b> enus, <b>P</b> luto <b>N</b> orth <b>S</b> tar <b>T</b> elstar The <b>e</b> arth revolves around the <b>s</b> un.	
Trade names	<b>B</b> uick <b>c</b> ar <b>S</b> ony <b>t</b> elevision	Notice that the name, not the item is capitalized
School subjects • Language course • Specific course • Words in a course that need to be capitalized • NOT general courses	<b>F</b> rench, <b>L</b> atin II <b>H</b> istory I <b>A</b> merican <b>h</b> istory <b>g</b> eography, <b>s</b> cience	
Titles • Books • Articles • Poems • Plays • Newspapers • Television shows • Radio programs	<b>P</b> ride and <b>P</b> rejudice “ <b>T</b> he <b>V</b> ietnam <b>W</b> ar” “ <b>O</b> de to a Grecian <b>U</b> rn” <u><b>A</b>rsenic and <b>O</b>ld <b>L</b>ace</u> The New York <b>T</b> imes “ <b>D</b> harma and <b>G</b> reg” “The <b>G</b> arrison <b>K</b> eiller <b>S</b> how”	Note that prepositions and articles are NOT capitalized. See Quotations and Underlining for rules about what to underline or surround with quotations

### Other capitalization rules:

<b>Capitalize first words:</b> • The first word of a sentence  • A quoted sentence  • A line of poetry or verse	The Mississippi River empties into the Gulf of Mexico.  “ <b>G</b> ive me liberty,” said Patrick Henry, “ <b>o</b> r give me death.”  <b>A</b> lone and warming his five wits, <b>T</b> he white owl in the belfry sits. -Alfred, Lord Tennyson	Note: “Give” begins with a capital letter because it begins a quotation. The second part of the quotation is not capitalized because it does not begin the quote or a new sentence.
<b>Letters</b>  • Salutations   • Closings	<b>D</b> ear Mr. Watson, <b>M</b> y dear Mrs. Washington,  <b>Y</b> ours, <b>V</b> ery truly yours,	Note: Only the first word in a salutation is capitalized.  Note: Only the first word in a closing is capitalized
<b>Outlines</b>	I. <b>D</b> inosaurs A. <b>B</b> rontosaurus	

	1. Food	
I, O	The winner is I. O, the day has begun!	
<b>Deities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Names of deities</li> <li>Sacred writings</li> </ul>	<b>God</b> <b>Allah</b>  the <b>Bible</b> <b>Acts</b> the <b>Torah</b>	

## Exercises

[Level A](#)

[Level B](#)

[Level C](#)