



# Capitalization

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# Capitalization

Capital letters, also sometimes called **uppercase** letters, are the taller letters you see when you read.

But a letter isn't a capital letter just because it's tall!

Every letter of the alphabet has a **capital** version and a **lowercase** version.

The two versions don't always look the same, as you can see here with the letter A:



## 1) The First Letter of a Sentence

➤ The first letter of a sentence is always capitalized,

E.g. **W**hen we make a date, he never shows up!

➤ The first letter of sentences that are included in other sentences are also capitalized,

E.g.

**M**y father always says,  
**T**he best view comes  
after the hardest climb”



## 2) Proper Nouns

➤ Names of relatives (to indicate family relationship) when used with name.

E.g. I received a gift from **Uncle George**, but not from my other uncle.

➤Names of relatives when used as proper name.

E.g. Here is a present I brought for **M**other.

Did you buy a present for your mother?

## ➤ Tittles

- preceding names,

E.g. She worked as the assistant to **Mayor** Jason.

## Exception

- Do **not** capitalize titles that follow names.

E.g. I was able to interview Miriam Moss, mayor of Amsterdam.



**Do not capitalize**

- Do **not** capitalize titles used as general words.

E.g. The governor attended the rally today.



**Do not capitalize**

- Capitalize very high-ranking government officials' titles even when not followed by a name or used in direct address when a specific individual is referred to.

E.g. They attended the inauguration of the **President** of the United States.

The **Secretary** of **State** walked into the room.

- If no specific individual is referred to, do not capitalize titles of even very high-ranking government officials.

E.g. Americans know that a president must be 35 years old to run for the office.



**Do not capitalize (not specific individual)**

- Capitalize important words in compound titles used with names, but do not capitalize prefixes or suffixes added to the titles.

E.g. The crowd applauded as **President-elect** Obama stepped onto the stage.

 **Do not capitalize**

The **ex-Governor** Brown will move to Alaska

### 3) The pronoun “I”

E.g. Everyone is aware of the problems **I** encountered on the trip.

## 4) Major words in titles of books, articles, and songs

E.g. Have you read Dickon's *Great Expectations*?

### Exception

➤ Do not capitalize short prepositions, conjunctions, or articles unless they are the first word of the title.

Novel Titles: **The Kite Runner**  
**Of Mice and Men**

Movie Titles: **Safe Heaven**  
**From Here to Eternity**

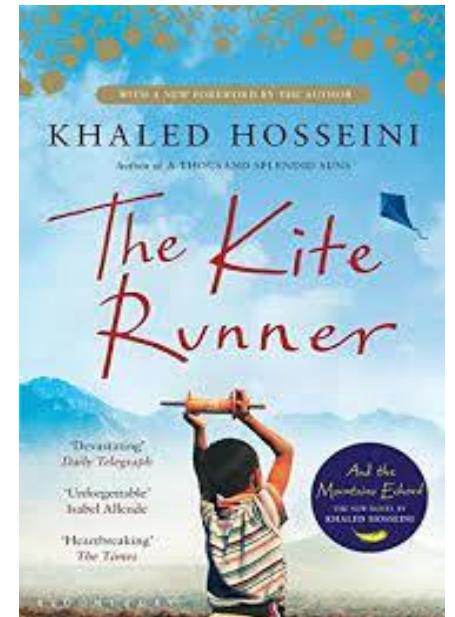
Song Titles: “**A Thousand Years**”  
“**What a Wonderful World**”

**A Thousand Years”**  
Heart beats fast  
Colors and promises  
How to be brave?  
How can I love when I'm afraid to fall?  
But watching you stand alone,  
All of my doubt suddenly goes away somehow.  
One step closer

*[Chorus:]*  
I have died every day waiting for you  
Darling, don't be afraid I have loved you  
For a thousand years  
I'll love you for a thousand more

Time stands still  
Beauty in all she is  
I will be brave  
I will not let anything take away  
What's standing in front of me  
Every breath  
Every hour has come to this  
One step closer

*[Chorus:]*  
I have died every day waiting for you  
Darling, don't be afraid I have loved you  
For a thousand years  
I'll love you for a thousand more



## 5) Names of God, specific deities, religious figures, and holy books

Gods: **Apollo**, **Zeus**

Religious figures: **Virgin Mary**, **Moses**

Holy Books: **Tripitaka**, **Bible**, **Korean**

### Exception

➤ Do not capitalize the non-specific use of the word “god”.

E.g. The Greeks believed in many gods.

## **6) Directions that are names, such as North, South, East, and West when used as sections of the country**

E.g. The Patels have moved to the **Southwest**.

### **Exception**

➤Do **not** capitalize directions when used as compass directions.

E.g. Jim lives two miles south from the supermarket.

## **7) Days of the week, months of the year and holidays**

E.g. **Friday**, **October**, **Halloween**

## 8) Seasons, when used in titles

E.g. John finished a course in Chemistry during the **Spring** 2009 semester.

### Exception

➤ Do **not** capitalize the names of seasons if they are used generally.

E.g. This has been a cold winter.

Next summer we will take a trip to Montreal.

## 9) Countries, nationalities, and specific languages

E.g. **Peru**, **Japan**, **Chinese**, **French**, **Spanish**, **Mandarin**

## 10) Periods and events

Eg. Victorian Era, Renaissance, French Revolution

### Exception

➤ Do not capitalize century numbers.

E.g. Technology revolutionized in the early twenty-first century.

## 11) Names of national, political, racial, and social groups

E.g. Chamber of Commerce, Gavel Club, House of Representatives, African-Americans

## 12) Names of planets

E.g. Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune

## 9) Trademarks

E.g. **Pepsi, Apple, Sony, Toyota**

## 10) The first word of a sentence following a colon

E.g. Joe's late arrival at the meeting rally made no difference: **He** had nothing important to add.

### Exception

➤ Do not capitalize the first word of a list following a colon if the list is not a complete sentence.

E.g. We were asked to bring the following supplies: headphones, a laptop, a pen, some paper

## **11) Salutations and closings in letters - first word only unless proper name is used**

### **➤ Salutations**

E.g. **D**ear student, **M**y dear friend

### **➤ Closings**

E.g. **Y**ours truly, **L**ove, **W**ith much love

## **12) Initials, initialisms, and acronyms**

Initials with names:

**J.K.** Rowling, **M**ichael **B.** Jordan

Initialism:

**FBI, CBS, DVD, SLBC**

Acronyms:

**PIN, RADAR, SCUBA**

# References

- <https://www.umgc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/writing-resources/grammar-help/capitalization.cfm> – University of Maryland Website
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