A variable in PHP always starts with a dollar sign $.

It must then contain a LETTER or UNDERSCORE.

It can then contain any of the following characters:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

_   *(this is an underscore)*

So, a variable can contain any number of letters, numbers or underscores but must start with a letter or underscore

E.g. $width   this is valid as it starts with a letter

$_length   this is valid as it starts with an underscore

$3sisters   this is invalid as it starts with a number

$_3sisters   this is valid

$Name   this is valid

$first_name   this is valid

$my_first_name   this is valid

$length&width   this is invalid as it contains the & character

Note that **$this** is a special variable that cannot be assigned.

It is also recommended that you avoid using variables that start with underscores as there are some important global variables that you will come across in later lessons e.g. $_POST

When writing code I usually use **camelCase**. This is the practice of writing compound words such that each word begins with a capital letter. Note that the first word does not contain a capital letter.

E.g.

$first**N**ame

$camel**C**ase

$side**L**ength

$side**W**idth