

CAPITALIZATION

Capitalize the first word of every sentence.

The cat scratched the dog. Why didn't he just run away?

Capitalize proper nouns, proper adjectives, and words used as essential parts of proper nouns.

When you can recognize the difference between proper nouns and adjectives and common or generic ones, you'll have little trouble deciding when to capitalize. Proper nouns name **specific** persons, places, or things. Proper adjectives are formed from proper nouns.

Steve Carell, Condoleeza Rice	Specific persons, not just any comedian or stateswoman.
the Liberty Bell, the Hope Diamond	Specific things, not just any bell or jewel.
Pocatello, the Snake River	Specific places, not just any city or river.
the South; New England; the Intermountain West	Specific geographic regions, not just any place south or northeast of here.
Boy Scouts of America, New York Yankees.	Specific organizations, associations, Government departments.
Gatorade, Subaru Outback	Brand names, trademarks, not just any product.
Chinese, Mexican-American, Arabic.	Ethnic origins, nationalities and languages.
Wednesday, Mother's Day	Days of the week and holidays.
the Constitution, World War II. the Civil Rights Movement,	Historical events, documents, periods, movements.

Capitalize the titles of relatives when they substitute for or form part of proper names, but not otherwise.

I hugged Aunt Maria and Uncle Luis.	"Aunt Maria" is the name I call this person, just like the name "Kate."
My aunt is Maria and my uncle is Luis.	"aunt" is a relationship or role here, like "teacher" or "doctor," not a name.
Grandpa helped with my homework.	"Grandpa" is the name I call this person, just like the name "John" or "Sue."
My grandfather helped with my homework.	"grandfather" is a relationship here, like "teacher" or "doctor," not a name.

Capitalize professional or royal titles when they substitute for or are part of proper names, but not otherwise.

Secretary of State Rice addressed us.
The secretary of state, Ms. Rice, spoke.
President Bush was here yesterday.
He greeted the President's plane.
He was elected president of his class.

the title appears as part of Rice's name
the title appears separately
the title appears as part of Bush's name
the title substitutes for Bush's name
the title appears separately

Capitalize points of the compass when they substitute for proper names (by reference to actual regions) but not when they refer to directions.

People living in the East thought anything west of Pittsburgh was wilderness.
Take the southern route for an interesting drive through the Midwest.

Capitalize academic subjects when they substitute for proper names (as in catalogue listings) or contain proper nouns or adjectives (such as the name of a foreign language or religion).

I'm taking math, geology, and Latin.

I'm taking Math 108 and Geology 100.

Latin is the proper name of a language, but the first two subjects are just ordinary nouns.

These are the official names of the courses in the catalogue.

Capitalize the titles of books, magazines, newspapers, scholarly journals, movies, television shows, songs, poems, short stories, plays.

Always capitalize a title's first and last words; within the title, capitalize each word except short prepositions, conjunctions and articles.

The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King
No Man is an Island

Notice that the titles of longer works, like books and movies, are italicized or underlined. They can usually be bought or handled by themselves.

"A Rose for Emily"
"With or Without You"

Notice that the titles of shorter works like poems, songs, and newspaper articles are placed in quotation marks. They're typically found inside other sources like anthologies, albums, or newspapers.