

Chapter 19

Capital Letters

The Rules for Capitalization

In written or printed English, a capital letter at the beginning of a word not only serves as an important eye signal to the reader (indicating, for example, the beginning of a sentence) but also often marks a significant difference in meaning (for example, the difference between *march* and *March*). In your writing, then, you should use necessary capitals. Just as important, you should carefully avoid unneeded capitals. Learning the rules of capitalization in this chapter will help you develop this writing skill.

19a. Capitalize the first word in every sentence.

INCORRECT the home economics teacher told us, “by doing a simple experiment, you can find out whether or not coffee contains chicory. sprinkle a small amount of coffee into a glass of ice water. the coffee grounds will stay on top of the water. if . chicory is present, it will not float but will sink and color the water.”

CORRECT The home economics teacher told us, “By doing a simple experiment, you can find out whether or not coffee contains chicory. Sprinkle a small amount of coffee into a glass of ice water. The coffee grounds will stay on top of the water. If chicory is present, it will not float but will sink and color the water.”

Traditionally, the first word of a line of poetry is capitalized.

EXAMPLE A duck whom I happened to hear
Was complaining quite sadly, “Oh, dear!
Our picnic’s today,
Bt the forecasters say
That the skies will be sunny and clear.”

Some modern poets (E. E. Cummings, for example) do not follow this practice. They say capitalize only the first line or sometimes not even that. When you are quoting, use capital letters as they are used in the copy of the poem.

EXERCISE 1. Make a list of the ten words that should be capitalized in the

following paragraph. Be sure to capitalize the words you list.

work has begun on developing a new kind of laser radar this instrument would be especially useful for blind people how does the radar work a laser device, which is small enough to fit onto an eyeglass frame, emits invisible infrared light beams when the light strikes an object, it bounces back to a receiver placed in the blind person's ear the receiver, in turn, sounds a small tone with this sort of device, the blind person can "hear" any object nearby the device is very promising in fact it may one day replace the cane or the Seeing Eye dog as an aid for the blind there are few better examples of how beneficial laser research can be. .

19b. Capitalize the pronoun *I* and the interjection *O*.

Although rarely used, *O* is always capitalized. Generally, it is reserved for invocations and is followed by the name of the person or thing being addressed. In your writing, you will probably find little opportunity to use *O*. You may, however, use the interjection *oh*, which is not capitalized unless it is the first word in a

EXERCISE 2. Number 1 on your paper. If an item is correct, write C after the appropriate number. If there are errors in the use of capitals, copy the item on your paper, inserting capitals where needed and omitting unnecessary capitals.

1. oh dear! i think i've lost my watch.
2. yesterday i learned the psalm which begins, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."
3. why shouldn't i paint the chair pink?
4. I think I'll pass the test tomorrow, but Oh, how I dread taking it!
5. In the poem "The Fool's Prayer," the jester pleads, "O Lord, be merciful to me, a fool!"
6. walking in the woods, i almost stepped .on a snake, and Oh, was i frightened!
7. Oh, Simone! I've won a trip to Europe!
8. Please listen carefully while i read the answer i received. .
9. oh, for pity's sake! i wish you would stop saying, "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?"
10. My favorite lines from the play are "see how she leans her cheek upon her hand. oh, that i were a glove upon that hand, that i might touch that cheek!"

19c. Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives.

As you study the following words, observe (1) the difference between a common noun and a proper noun and (2) the ways adjectives. (called *proper adjectives*) may be formed from proper nouns.

COMMON NOUNS

a poet
a country
a goddess
a queen

PROPER NOUNS

Homer
Trueky
Athens
Queen Elizabeth

PROPER ADJECTIVES

Homeric simile
Truekish border
Athenian wisdom
Elizabethan drama

Common nouns name a class or group. For example, *teacher* and *student* are common nouns because they name one of a group of people. Common nouns are not capitalized unless they begin a sentence or a direct quotation or are included in a title. Proper nouns, such as *Mrs. Hersey* and *Paul Donahue*, name *particular* people, places, or things. They are always capitalized.

Some proper names consist of more than one word. In these names, short prepositions (generally, fewer than five letters) and articles are not capitalized.

EXAMPLES

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
Society for the Prevention of Crueilty to Animals
Ivan the Terrible

Proper adjectives, adjectives formed from proper nouns, usually modify common nouns: *Spanish mackerel*. Sometimes, however, the proper adjective modifies a proper name (for example, *Victorian England*) or is part of a proper name (for example, *Arctic Circle*).

• **NOTE** Proper nouns and adjectives sometimes lose their capitals through frequent usage; examples are *maverick* and *titanic*.

EXERCISE 3. Following is a list of common and proper nouns. For each proper noun, give its proper adjective. Use your dictionary if you wish. After the proper adjective, write an appropriate noun for the adjective to modify. For each common noun, give two proper nouns.

EXAMPLES

1. Mexico
1. *Mexican border*

2. city
2. *Chicago, New York*

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1. France | 4. Jefferson | 7. pioneer | 9. island |
| 2. India | 5. Spain | 8. month | 10. author |
| 3. the Bible | 6. continent | | |

(1) Capitalize the names of persons.

EXAMPLES Sandra Bobby Joe Franchlin
 Miss Willis Mr. Kenji Hayashi
 Margaret Love Aunt Jean and Uncle Gordon

(2) Capitalize geographical names.

Towns, Cities Georgetown, San Diego, Kansas City
Counties, Townships Harrison County, Sheffield Township
States Alaska, Florida, North Dakota, New Hampshire
Sections the East, the North, the Southwest, the Middle West, New
 England

• **NOTE** The words *north, west, southeast, etc.*, are not capitalized when they indicate direction: *driving through the Northwest* but *traveling northwest*; *states in the South* but *south of town*.

Countries the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand
Continents North America, Asia, Europe, Africa
Islands Philippine Islands, Long Island, the West Indies, the Isle of
 Palms
Mountains Rocky Mountains, Mount Mckinley, the Alps, the Mount
 of Olives
Bodies of Water Pacific Ocean, Adriatic Sea, Red River, Lake of the Woods
Roads, Highways, Streets Route 66, Interstate 787, Pennsylvania Turnpike,
 Seneca Avenue, West Twenty-first Street, Walnut Drive
Parks Yellowstone National Park, Cleburne State Park

• **NOTE** In a hyphenated number, the second word begins with a small letter.

Notice that words like *City, Island, River, Street, and Park* are capitalized because they are part of the name. If words like these are not part of a proper name, they are common nouns and are therefore not capitalized.

Compare the following lists.

PROPER NOUNS

life in New York City
Liberty Island
crossing the Spokane River
on State Street
in Grant Park

COMMON NOUNS

life in a big city
a faraway island
across the river
on a narrow street
in a state park

EXERCISE 4. Number 1--20 on your paper. In each of the following items you are to choose the correct one of the two forms. After the proper number on your paper, write the letter of the correct form (*a* or *b*).

1. a. Her store is on Front Street in Burlington.
b. Her store is on front street in Burlington.
2. a. We crossed the Snake river.
b. We crossed the Snake River.
3. a. He now lives in california.
b. He now lives in California.
4. a. Did you fly over South America?
b. Did you fly over south America?
5. a. She took a picture of Pikes peak.
b. She took a picture of Pikes Peak.
6. a. City streets in the west are often wide.
b. City streets in the West are often wide.
7. a. Yellowstone National Park has many geysers.
b. Yellowstone national park has many geysers.
8. a. The city of Columbus is the capital of Ohio.
b. The City of Columbus is the capital of Ohio.
9. a. The hurricane swept over the Gulf Of Mexico.
b. The hurricane swept over the Gulf of Mexico.
10. a. Drive east on Interstate 35.
b. Drive East on interstate 35.
11. a. We are proud of our State parks.
b. We are proud of our state parks.
12. a. I live on Forty-Fifth Street.
b. I live on Forty-fifth Street.
13. a. The headquarters are in Travis County.

- b. The headquarters are in Travis county.
- 14. a. The Vikings called the atlantic ocean the sea of darkness.
- b. The Vikings called the Atlantic Ocean the Sea of Darkness.
- 15. a. The states in the Midwest are referred to as the nation's breadbasket.
- b. The States in the midwest are referred to as the nation's breadbasket.
- 16. a. A three-lane Highway is dangerous.
- b. A three-lane highway is dangerous.
- 17. a. I have a map of the Hawaiian Islands.
- b. I have a map of the Hawaiian islands.
- 18. a. New York City is the largest city in the east.
- b. New York City is the largest city in the East.
- 19. a. The Great Salt Lake is near the Nevada border.
- b. The Great Salt lake is near the Nevada border.
- 20. a. Her address is 2009 Bell A venue.
- b. Her address is 2009 Bell avenue.

EXERCISE 5. Write a paragraph of about 100 words telling about a town or city that you know well. Give its exact location (the county, state, section of the country), and name some of its streets. Also tell about the points of interest – parks, dams, lakes, mountains – that your state is proud of. Be sure to capitalize all of the geographical names that you use in your . description.

(3) Capitalize names of organizations, business firms, institutions, and government bodies.

Organizations United Fund, National Basketball Association, American Cancer Society

• **NOTE** The word *party* is usually written without a capital letter when it follows a proper adjective: *Republican party, Democratic party, Federalist party.*

Business firms Imperial Biscuit Company, Western Union, Academy Deartment Stores, Inc.

Institutions United States Naval Academy, Tufts University, Radcliffe College, North High School, Bellevue Hospital

• **NOTE** Do not capitalize words like *hotel, theater, college, and high school* unless they are part of a proper name.

Kenmore High School

a high school teacher

Waldorf-Astoria Hotel
Ritz Theater

a hotel in New York
to the theater

Government bodies Congress, Federal Bureau of Investigation, House of Representatives, State Department [Usage is divided on the capitalization of such words as *post office* and *courthouse*. You may write them either way unless the full name is given, when they must be capitalized: *Kearny Post Office*, *Victoria County Courthouse*.]

(4) Capitalize the names of historical events and periods, special events, and calendar items.

Historical events and periods French Revolution, Boston Tea Party, Middle Ages, World War II

Special events Interscholastic Debate Tournament, Gulf Coast Track and Field Championship, Parents' Day

Calendar items Saturday, December, Fourth of July, Mother's Day

• **NOTE** Do not capitalize the names of seasons unless personified: *summer*, *winter*, *spring*, *autumn*, or *fall*, but "Here is Spring in her green dress."

Names of seasons are, of course, capitalized when they are part of the names of special events: *Winter Carnival*, *Spring Festival*.

(5) Capitalize the names of nationalities, races, and religions.

Nationalities Canadians, an American, a Greek

Races African-American, Caucasian

Religions Christianity, a Baptist, Mormons, Muslims, Buddhists

(6) Capitalize the brand names of business products.

EXAMPLES Tostitos, Frigidaire, Chevrolet

• **NOTE** Do not capitalize the noun that often follows a brand name: *Chevrolet truck*.

(7) Capitalize the names of ships, planets, monuments, awards, and any other particular places, things, or events.

Ships, Trains the Mayflower, the Discovery, the Yankee Clipper, the Silver Meteor

Aircraft, Spacecraft, Missiles F-18 Hornet, Voyager 2, Titan II

Planets, Stars Mars, Jupiter, the Milky Way, the Dog Star

• **NOTE** Planets, constellations, asteroids, stars, and groups of stars are capitalized; however, unless they are listed with other heavenly bodies, *sun*, *moon*, and *earth* are not capitalized.

Monuments, Memorials Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial

Buildings Prudential Insurance Building, Rockefeller Center, Eiffel Tower

Awards Purple Heart, Distinguished Service Cross, Masquers' Dramatic Medal, Key Club Achievement Award

EXERCISE 6. Copy the following, using capitals wherever needed.

1. mars and saturn
2. on monday, march 20
3. a theater on west forty-third street
4. a hospital in albany, new york
5. carson park, near jef
6. laddie boy dog food
7. the sinking of the *lusitania*
8. world war I
9. the class play on thursday night
10. columbia university
11. an oriental rug
12. the union of soviet socialist republics
13. fuller brushes
14. on christmas eve
15. a presbyterian ferson high school
16. new haven yacht club
17. ford motor company
18. toyota sedan
19. french and indian war
20. the united states supreme court

EXERCISE 7. Correctly use each of the following in a sentence of your own.

1. high school
2. High School
3. hotel
4. Hotel
5. building
6. Building
7. earth
8. Earth
9. south
10. South

19d. Do *not* capitalize the names of school subjects, except languages and course names followed by a number.

EXAMPLES Next year I will study a foreign language and will take general science, history, and algebra.

At present I am taking English, Geography I, American History II, and home economics.

• **NOTE** The Do *not* capitalize the members of a class (*freshman, sophomore, junior, senior*) unless part of a proper noun: A *freshman* cannot attend the *Junior-Senior Banquet*.

REVIEW EXERCISE A. Copy the following sentences, using capitals wherever needed.

1. to begin with, ms. garcia mentioned the fact that mercury and venus are closer to earth than jupiter is.
2. all freshmen at jefferson high school know they will take at least three years of english and one year of mathematics.
3. while in the city of washington, we saw the ford theater, where lincoln was shot.
4. a methodist, a baptist, and a roman catholic conducted an interesting panel discussion.
5. since I plan to study medicine at northwestern university, I'm taking latin and biology I.
6. after I had gone to the grocery store at the comer of thirty-first street and stonewall avenue, I stopped at the twin oaks lumber company, which is two blocks south of cooper avenue.
7. vacationing in the west, we saw electric peak, which is on the northern boundary of yellowstone national park; we also saw devil's tower, which is in northeastern wyoming.
8. later we drove along riverside drive and saw the lincoln memorial, which is on the banks of the potomac river in potomac park.
9. in the spring, usually the first saturday after easter, the women's missionary society, a baptist organization, gives a picnic for our class.
10. leaving ecuador, in south america, on a banana boat named *bonanza*, they went through the panama canal and sailed through the caribbean sea to nassau in the bahama islands.

19e. Capitalize titles.

(1) Capitalize the title of a person when it comes before a name.

EXAMPLES	<u>P</u> resident Gaines	<u>M</u> s. Morrison
	<u>P</u> incipal Yates	<u>M</u> iss Chan
	<u>D</u> r. Hughes	<u>P</u> rofessor Jackson

(2) Capitalize a title used alone or following a person's name only if it refers to a high official or to someone to whom you wish to show special respect.

EXAMPLES

Can you name England's Prime Minister, the Prince of Wales, and the Queen of Sweden?

The General has written that he will be unable to attend.

I once saw the President jogging near the White House.

Andy Simmons, president of our science club, announced that Marian had been elected secretary.

My brother Roger, a captain in the Marine Corps, is home on leave.

• NOTE When a title is used alone in direct address, it is usually capitalized.

EXAMPLES

We are happy to see you, Doctor.

What is your decision, Superintendent?

Tell me, Coach, what are our chances?

(3) Capitalize words showing family relationship when used with a person's name but not when preceded by a possessive.**EXAMPLES**

Aunt Mabel, Cousin Enid, Uncle Stanley, my mother, your father, Clifford's sister

EXCEPTION

When family-relationship words like *aunt* and *grandfather* are customarily thought of as part of a name, capitalize them even after a possessive noun or pronoun.

EXAMPLE

My Uncle Stanley lives in Ohio.

• NOTE Words of family relationship may be capitalized or not when used in place of a person's name: I gave it to *Mother* or I gave it to *mother*.

(4) Capitalize the first and last words and all important words in titles of books, periodicals, poems, stories, movies, paintings, and other works of art.

Unimportant words in a title are *a*, *an*, *the*, and short prepositions (fewer than five letters) and coordinating conjunctions. Of course, if the last word in the title is a short preposition, it is capitalized.

The words *a*, *an*, and *the* written before a title are capitalized only when they are part of a title: the *Saturday Review*, *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Before the names of magazines and newspapers, *a*, *an*, and *the* are usually not capitalized in a composition: I was reading the *Denver Post*.

The Bible and the books of the Bible are always capitalized.

EXAMPLES

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, *The Sea Around Us*, *My Name Is Asher Lev* [books]
the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the *Riverton Gazette* [periodicals]
"The Charge of the Light Brigade" [poem]
"The Pit and the Pendulum" [story]
Star Wars, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Black Stallion* [movies]
Mona Lisa, *Portrait in Gray and Black*, *The Thinker* [works of art]
Treaty of Paris, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights [historical documents]
"Modern Family," "Good Morning America," "Nova,"
"Monday Night Football" [television programs]
"Missouri Waltz," "Love's Old Sweet Song," The Marriage of Figaro, "The Flight of the Bumblebee," Beethoven's Ninth Symphony [musical compositions]

(5) Capitalize words referring to the Deity.

EXAMPLE God and His universe

• **NOTE** The word *god* is not capitalized when it refers to the gods of ancient mythology: The Greek poet paid tribute to the god Zeus.

EXERCISE 8. Number on your paper 1-10. If the capitalization in each of the following phrases and . sentences is correct, write C (for *correct*) after the appropriate number on your paper. If the capitalization is incorrect, write the correct form.

1. Superintendent adams
2. "Home On The Range"
3. the *Reader's Digest*
4. elected president of
5. the president of the United States
6. among the Roman gods
7. My Aunt Clare taught me to respect my parents
8. my cousin's mother
9. N. Scott Momaday her class won the Pulitzer Prize
10. *the Mystery of Edwin Drood*

EXERCISE 9. Write two sentences of your own to illustrate each of the five rules for capitalizing titles. (You will have ten sentences in all.)

REVIEW EXERCISE B. Copy the following sentences, and use capitals

wherever needed. In this exercise, apply all the rules you have learned in this chapter. Be prepared to give a reason for each capital that you use.

1. speaking to the seniors of lamar high school, mrs. carter praised *losing battles*, a well-known novel by eudora welty.
2. on the sunday before labor day, we drove as far as the murphy motel, a mile west of salem, virginia; the manager, mr. kelly, told us he was a member of the virginia tourist court association.
3. waiting for a city bus at the comer of twentyfirst street and hemphill drive, we admired the westlake shirts in henson's window display.
4. mother and her sister, my aunt carlotta, told me about rockefeller center and about the shops on fifth avenue in new york city.
5. professor massey studied at the library ofcongress and the folger shakespeare library during july and august.
6. althea gibson's autobiography, *I always wanted to be somebody*, was published by harper & row.
7. I especially like the photographs -made by pan american world airways -of mount mckinley, in alaska.
8. in her junior year at sheridan high school, aunt selma studied latin, french, english, geometry, and art.
9. the reverend walker said that the greeks worshipped many gods, whereas it is our practice to worship only one god.
10. after the soldiers so bravely fought against the forces of general santa anna in 1836, the alamo became famous as the shrine of texas liberty, a symbol of american freedom, like the statue of liberty.

REVIEW EXERCISE C. Copy the following, using capitals wherever needed.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. dr. deborah n. morgan | 11. the washington monument |
| 2. taking chemistry II | 12. north of kansas city |
| 3. traffic on a main street | 13. on highway 80 |
| 4. <i>the adventures of huckleberry finn</i> | 14. the secretary of state |
| 5. merry christmas, mayor. | 15. early christians and jews |
| 6. in history class | 16. the old testament in the bible |
| 7. an assignment in | 17. last thanksgiving english |
| 8. a problem in mathematics | 18. "song of the open road" |
| 9. a park in the west | 19. the boston tea party |
| 10. a mexican town | 20. the milky way and the north star |

SUMMARY STYLE SHEET

Names of Persons

Augusta Savage	a sculptor
Mrs. Alfred E. Jones	a friend of the family
Mr. Stanley Fillmore	our family lawyer

Geographical Names

Mexico City	a city in Mexico
Shetland County	a county in North Carolina
the Canary Islands	some Islands in the Atlantic
Great Smoky Mountains	climbing mountains
Pacific Ocean	across the ocean
Sixth Street	a narrow street
Abilene State Park	a state park
in the East, North, Midwest	traveling east, north, west

Organizations, Business Firms, Institutions, Government Bodies

Oakdale Garden Club	a club for gardeners
Safety First Moving Company	a company of movers
Rosedale High School	a small high school
Supreme Court	a traffic court
Department of Commerce	a department of government

Historical Events and Periods, Special Events, Calendar Items

War Between the States	a bitter war
Atomic Age	an age of progress
National Open Golf Tournament	a golf tournament
Labor Day	a national holiday
April, July, October, January	spring, summer, autumn, winter

Nationalities, Races, Religions

British	a nationality
Caucasian	a race
Roman Catholic	the gods of ancient Rome
God and His universe	a religion

Brand Names

Lamborghini	a sports car
Samsung	a television

Other Particular Places, Things, Events, Awards

<i>Flying Cloud</i>	a clipper ship
<i>Metroliner</i>	a streamlined train
<i>Enterprise</i>	a spacecraft

Polaris
North Star
Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Pluto
Jefferson Memorial
Washington Monument
Senior Class Picnic
Congressional Medal of Honor

Specific Courses, Languages

Chemistry I
Spanish
AP United States History

Titles

Officer Wiley **Hurry, Officer!**
the **P**resident of the **U**nited **S**tates
the **S**enator from **W**est **V**irginia
the **K**ing of **D**enmark
Uncle Randolph
Harriett's Aunt Lucy
A Wrinkle in Time
the **N**ew **Y**ork **T**imes
Holy Bible

a missil
a bright star
on the earth
a memorial to Jefferson
a monument in Washington
a senior in high school
a medal for bravery

my chemistry class
a foreign language
the history book

a police officer
the president of the class
a senator's duties
a king's subjects
my favorite uncle
Harriet's aunt
a novel
a daily newspaper
a religious book