

Capitalization

MASTER 16 RULES OF CAPITALIZATION

Rule 1: Capitalize the first word of a .

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

CAUTION: Words after a semicolon are not usually capitalized.

Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin.

Rule 2: Capitalize proper . A proper noun names a specific person, place, or thing.

Common noun: *The city was dark and empty.*

Proper noun: *The city of Metropolis was dark and empty.*

Rule 3: Capitalize proper . Proper adjectives are made from proper nouns.

French toast

Norway maple

Rocky Mountain spotted fever

Labrador retriever

Rule 4: Capitalize a title when used with a person's name.

Professor Art Official

BUT *a professor*

Dr. Serge E. Call

BUT *a doctor*

Rule 5: Capitalize each letter in made from capitalized words.

IRS (Internal Revenue Service)

NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)

NOTE: Some abbreviations are capitalized even though the words they stand for are not.

RBI (runs batted in)

MS (manuscript)

Rule 6: Capitalize days of the week, months, and special days.

Tuesday

January

Independence Day

CAUTION: Do not capitalize the seasons.

Not: *the Fall semester*

But: *the fall semester*

Rule 7: Capitalize major words in a title.

Books: *Gone with the Wind*
Newspapers: *The Christian Science Monitor*
Poems: *"Dover Beach"*
Plays: *Death of a Salesman*
Short

Stories: *"The Lady, or the Tiger?"*

NOTE: Articles (such as *a, the*), prepositions (such as *of, with*), and conjunctions (such as *or*) of fewer than five letters do not get capitalized unless they begin a title.

Rule 8: Always capitalize the pronoun *I*, even in contractions.

I'm not sure what I did to offend you, but I'll surely make up for it.

Rule 9: Capitalize a region of the country or world; do not capitalize a direction.

The Confederacy is also referred to as the South.

BUT

Many retirees go south during the winter.

Rule 10: Capitalize the name of a place, organization, or business only if you give its actual title.

Oak Street Pharmacy *the pharmacy on Oak Street*

BUT *a television network*

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Rule 11: Capitalize words such as *mother* only if used as a title.

What big eyes you have, Grandmother!

BUT

My grandmother has big eyes.

Rule 12: Capitalize a rank or title only when used with a name.

I met General Colin Powell.

BUT

A general must consider the welfare of the troops.

NOTE: If you can put the word *any* in front of a noun, that noun should **NOT** be capitalized.

Rule 13: Capitalize the name of a specific institution, not of a type of institution.

We attended Fullerton High School from 1991 to 1995.

BUT

I should have taken more math courses in high school.

Rule 14: Capitalize the name of an official academic course, not a branch of learning.

No one got higher than a B in Biology 101.

BUT

I have always had a hard time with biology.

Rule 15: Capitalize a sacred name, not a secular word made from it.

<i>God</i>	<i>a godlike figure</i>
<i>the Koran</i>	<i>a scriptural story</i>

Rule 16: Learn to deal with words with two meanings.

George Bush is a Republican; Jimmy Carter is a republican.

In the case of George Bush, *Republican* refers to an official political party and should be capitalized. In the case of Jimmy Carter, *republican* refers only to a type of government and should not be capitalized.

Sample Quiz questions:

1. Choose the sentence that contains no errors in capitalization.
 - a. Traditionally held on the last Thursday in November, thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday.
 - b. Traditionally held on the last Thursday in november, Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday.
 - c. Traditionally held on the last Thursday in November, Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday.

Answer: c. Traditionally held on the last Thursday in November, Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday.

2. Choose the sentence that contains no error in capitalization.
 - a. One friend of mine has seen *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* almost a hundred times.
 - b. One friend of mine has seen *The Rocky Horror picture show* almost a hundred times.
 - c. One friend of mine has seen *the rocky horror picture show* almost a hundred times.

Answer: a. One friend of mine has seen *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* almost a hundred times.