

CAPITALIZATION

Using capital letters gives clarity to the reader, mainly to signal the beginning of a new sentence and to identify proper nouns and titles. The first letter of the first word in every sentence should be capitalized. Additionally, the personal pronoun “I” should always be capitalized. However, there are many other situations in which you should use capitalization in writing.

NOUNS

Proper Nouns

A proper noun is a word or group of words that names a **specific person, place, or thing**, including brand/trademarked names. Proper nouns are always capitalized to provide emphasis on important information, no matter where they appear in the sentence.

States, cities, countries, street names, days of the week, holidays, months, religions, and languages are all proper nouns. However, certain categories, such as planets and cardinal directions, are capitalized when used to denote a specific place; seasons should not be capitalized unless they are part of a title; and churches or temples are only capitalized if the word is part of the formal name. Examples:

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald takes place in New York and was originally written in English.
- A medieval peasant would have been surprised to see a Dyson vacuum cleaner.
- On the West Coast, Sally works as a farmer and plants seeds into the earth. She lives east of Seattle.
- The third planet from the sun is Earth.
- For the spring semester, I have class on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- In February, we celebrate Black History Month and Valentine’s Day.
- The Saint Anne Catholic Church has Bibles with both the English and Latin translations in them.

Jobs/Titles

You should capitalize a title when it comes before the name, but not if it stands alone. Furthermore, when writing about a specific class or academic department, those names should also be capitalized. For example:

- I watched a documentary about President Hoover on TV today.
- Johnny got a prescription from his doctor.
- The professor is teaching his popular class, The Revolution of French Literature, for the upper-division World Language majors.

For titles of academic papers, each style guide (MLA, APA, etc.) has different requirements for capitalization, so check the guide for the specific style you are writing in.

CONTACT US:

(702) 895-3908 | writingcenter@unlv.edu
unlv.edu/writing-center

