



Capitalization Guidelines

Capitalization is a formatting tool used to let the reader know when a sentence is starting, to show proper nouns and titles, and to highlight important words in a title. This source outlines some of the common capitalization rules in the English language.

In English, you should capitalize...

- the first letter of the first word in a sentence
- the pronoun “I”
- Names and initials
- Academic letter grades (ex. A, B, C, D, F)
- Months and days of the week
- Titles that precede a name (Ex. **Professor** McNamara)
- Adjectives that are derived from a proper noun (ex. **Canadian** wildlife)
- Musical notes (ex. middle C)
- Proper nouns (ex. London)
 - ⇒ Proper nouns are words that refer to a specific person, place, or thing.

If you are using the general version of a proper noun, then you use lowercase letters. A general noun is something that is generic and does not refer any specific person, place, or thing.

| <u>Proper Version</u> | <u>General Version</u> |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| President Kennedy | the president |
| The United States Army | the army |
| The Brooklyn Bridge | the bridge |

Check your knowledge!

Which of these should be capitalized? Circle the right answer!

A. river B. school C. pepsi D. desert

A. horned frog B. elephant C. ferret D. penguin

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

Sources Consulted: Purdue OWL, MLA 9 Handbook