



## APSU Writing Center

### Capitalization

#### Capitalization

##### General Rule

- Capitalize proper nouns (*specific* people, places, and things). Do not capitalize common nouns (*general* people, places, and things). Capitalize the first word in every sentence (i.e. title case).

##### Abbreviations

- Capitalize abbreviations and acronyms for organizations, agencies, associations, countries, states, provinces, academic degrees, professional designations, etc.
  - **Examples:** FBI, NBA

##### Geographic Locations

- Capitalize the name of all continents, countries, districts, regions, counties, cities, and towns.
  - **Examples:** The United States, the South
    - Note: Only capitalize words such as “South” and “West” when referring to a particular region of a country or part of a city. *Do not* capitalize when used as directional words. (See “Directions.”)

##### Computers

- Capitalize the names of computer programs, keys, and menu items.
  - **Examples:** Microsoft Word, Google Chrome

##### Degrees

- Capitalize the abbreviations of academic degrees and professional designations.
  - **Examples:** Jane Doe, PhD; David Smith, M.D.
- *Do not* capitalize academic degrees or professional designations if they are spelled out.
  - **Examples:** master’s degree, doctor of dental surgery

##### Directions

- Capitalize compass points when indicating a region or world division.
  - **Examples:** The Western Hemisphere, the South
- *Do not* capitalize compass points when giving a general direction or indicating part of a state or province.
  - **Examples:** go south, head east



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- Capitalize family terms when substituting them for a personal name, when addressing the person directly, or when pairing them with a personal name.
  - **Examples:** Mom, Uncle Bill, Cousin Ellie
- *Do not* capitalize family terms when paired with a possessive pronoun
  - **Examples:** my niece, your aunt

#### Historical Periods and Events

- Capitalize historical periods, eras, movements, and events.
  - **Examples:** The Roaring 20's, The Great Awakening

#### Geographical Terms

- Capitalize geographical terms when referring to specific geographical features.
  - **Examples:** The Rocky Mountains, Death Valley

#### Government and Military

- Capitalize the word “government” when referring to a specific country’s government.
  - **Example:** The United States Government
- Capitalize the names of government or military agencies and political parties.
  - **Examples:** The Central Intelligence Agency, the United States Marines
- Capitalize the word “administration” when indicating a political party or a government board, “cabinet” when referring to a specific cabinet, and “federal” when discussing the “Federal Government.”
  - **Examples:** The Bush Administration, the President’s Cabinet
- Capitalize the words “nation” and “republic” when used in place of a country’s name.
  - **Example:** “The Nation stands united.”
- Use capitalization when naming a flag.
  - **Examples:** The Star-Spangled Banner, the Union Jack
- Capitalize federal and state courts when referring to them by name.
  - **Examples:** The Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals
- *Do not* capitalize words denoting a system of government rather than a political party.
  - **Example:** democratic republic
- *Do not* capitalize city or district courts.



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#### Landmarks

- Capitalize the names of buildings, bridges, monuments, parks, schools, and other similar landmarks or constructions.
  - **Examples:** Austin Peay State University, the Golden Gate Bridge

#### Names of Persons

- Capitalize names of individuals.
  - **Examples:** John Jacob Doe, Barack Obama
- Capitalize epithets attached to names or nicknames.
  - **Examples:** Richard the LionHearted, Bloody Mary
- Capitalize words derived from personal names.
  - **Examples:** Marxism, Keynesian economics
- Capitalize prepositions and articles in names not preceded by a first name or title.
  - **Examples:** Van Leeuwen, Thomas van Leeuwen

#### Organizations

- Capitalize names of all organizations, official groups, clubs, companies, associations, institutions, bands, etc.
  - **Examples:** The American Cancer Society, Student Government Association)

#### Personal Titles

- Capitalize all academic, religious, government, and honorary titles and ranks.
  - **Examples:** Professor Smith, Reverend Johnson
- Capitalize titles when used as personal addresses.
  - **Examples:** “Hello, Officer”; “What’s the prognosis, Doctor?”
- *Do not* capitalize titles when they are not referring to a specific person or when used in a general sense.
  - **Examples:** “The doctor is in”; “I hope to be president”; “Please notify the mayor”
- *Do not* capitalize former, ex-, or –elect.
  - **Example:** former President George Bush

#### Planets

- Capitalize the names of planets, stars, and other astronomical bodies.
  - **Examples:** Mercury, Venus



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- Earth is always capitalized when it is used in an astronomical way, but it is lowercase if it is used in a more generic sense.
  - **Examples:** We will leave Earth in June to travel to Mars; I wish for peace on earth.

### Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, and Languages

- Capitalize the names of all races, ethnicities, and nationalities; the languages associated with them; and any words derived from them.
  - **Examples:** Canadian, Asian, Spanish

### Religion

- Capitalize the names of all world religions and their derivations as well as religious sects.
  - **Examples:** Islam, Christianization
- Capitalize the names of all sacred books, as well as their versions and parts, sections, or chapters.
  - **Examples:** Holy Bible, Koran
- Capitalize the names of religious creeds, terms, or traditions.
  - **Examples:** The Lord's Supper, the Four Noble Truths
- Capitalize all specific names for the Supreme Being(s) and the Devil.
  - **Examples:** God, Buddha

### Thoroughfares

- Capitalize the names of roads, streets, boulevards, highways, interstates, etc.
  - **Examples:** Madison Street, Interstate 40

### Time and Date

- Capitalize days of the week, months, and holidays.
  - **Examples:** Monday, September, Christmas Day
- *Do not* capitalize the seasons.
  - **Examples:** winter, spring
- *Do not* capitalize a.m. or p.m., noon, or midnight.

### Titles of Works

- Capitalize the titles and subtitles of books, documents, musical compositions, works of art, programs, shows, plays, and movies.
  - **Examples:** *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Wedding March*
- *Do not* capitalize articles, coordinating conjunctions, or prepositions of less than five letters in titles unless they are the first or last word of a title.
  - **Examples:** *The Woman in Black*, *The Lion*, *the Witch*, *and the Wardrobe*