

4 Capitals

Most errors in capitalization occur because the writer capitalizes words which should not be capitalized, rather than the other way around. Examine the following groups to determine correct use for capitals.

1. PEOPLE

- Capitalize words used as names: On the big day, Mother wore a crisp, green gown, and Dad wore his new suit.
- Capitalize members of groups, races, nationalities, religions: Indians, Jews, Catholics, Mexicans, Europeans, French.
- Capitalize titles of people: Dr. Johnson, President Buchanan, Representative Rayburn.

2. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

- Capitalize names of cities, countries, states, geographical areas: France, Seattle, South Dakota: The temperature climbed to a humid 94° in the South, while the North (*used to indicate geographical area*) suffered under chilling winds.
- Do not capitalize words like north, south, east, or west when they name directions: Early in May brilliant red birds flew north (*used to indicate direction*).

3. SCHOOLS, COURSE TITLES, BUSINESSES

- Capitalize the names of schools, specific course titles, and all language courses: Ed Johnston went to UCLA and had difficulty with Botany I and German.
- Do not capitalize references to a general school subject: I certainly hope Ed didn't give up his study of science.
- Capitalize the names of specific companies or institutions: Ms. Gold moved from General Motors to the Ford Motor Company.

4. DIRECT QUOTATIONS AND TITLES

- In addition to capitalizing the first word in every sentence, be sure to capitalize the first word in a direct quotation: In a booming voice he shouted, "Don't give up the ship!"
- Do not capitalize after an interruption in the quote: "Believe me," Jane remarked, "there is nothing careless about his action."
- Capitalize the first, last, and all important words in titles of books, themes, songs, plays, movies, television programs, magazines and newspapers. (Unless they are the first words in titles, do not capitalize words like an, a, the, of, and, but, as, to, for, from, in, on, over.)
Lord of the Rings, The Wall Street Journal, "What I Did on My Summer Vacation."

5. DAYS, MONTHS, HOLIDAYS

- Capitalize days of the week, months of the year, and holidays: Thursday, November 27, Thanksgiving Day, loomed cold and snowy.
- Do not capitalize seasons: White roses bloomed in late spring, but the deep red ones did not appear until summer.

6. SALUTATIONS AND CLOSINGS

- In salutations of letters, capitalize the first word and all names or titles: Madam, Dear Mary, Gentlemen, Dear Ms. Johnson.
- In closings, capitalize first word only: Yours truly, Very truly yours, Your friend, Sincerely yours, Yours sincerely, Cordially yours.

7. DO NOT CAPITALIZE

- trees: elm, oak, walnut.
- flowers: rose, carnation, orchid.
- birds: sparrow, blue jay, robin.
- animals: lion, tiger, elephant.
- games: baseball, football, tennis.
- members of a class: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.

EXERCISES

Insert the capitals needed in the following sentences. If a sentence is correct, mark C next to the sentence number.

1. The famous dr. johnson spoke at aunt ruth's garden party.
2. Does memorial day have anything to do with world war I?
3. If Jean passes latin and greek, french and spanish should be a cinch.
4. jackie got a job at schrader research company last tuesday.
5. At the end of her first day, she said, "this is a great place to work!"
6. The indians were neither jews nor catholics when the english first arrived in what is now the united states.
7. Dominick went from jamesburg elementary school to jamesburg high school to the university of maryland.
8. My mother edith thought *roots* was a great book and *a woman called moses* an excellent television movie.
9. Last october, in the middle of fall, the roses started to bloom and the robins came back.
10. I guess labor day marks the end of summer for the hunts because they came back to the south after spending july and august in maine.
11. The mexicans and the indians were here long before the english arrived.
12. When is uncle max coming back from his tour of spain, portugal, and greece?