

Johnson County Community College

Capitalization

1. Capitalize the first word of every new grammatical unit (sentence or intended fragment punctuated as a sentence).

The students thought the homework was difficult.

What is your desire? Nothing.

2. Capitalize the first word of every line in conventional poetry. (e.e. cummings is a good example of unconventionality concerning capitalization.)
3. Capitalize the first word of a quotation if it is a complete sentence. If it is not a sentence, do not capitalize the first word unless for another reason.

The girl's mother cried, "He didn't want her to go."

John's father yelled, "stop!" before John fell.

If the quotation of a sentence is broken in two, the second part is not capitalized.

"He will," John said, "do as he pleases."

4. Always capitalize the pronoun I (not the letter *i*) but do not capitalize other pronouns unless they begin a sentence.

I am what I am. She is what she is.

Note: *O*, not *oh*, is always capitalized. *O* is used most frequently in literature and prayer.

O Lord, My God!

5. Capitalize proper nouns and adjectives. A proper noun is the name of a particular person, place, or thing.

John and Judy --people

Cincinnati--city

The Blue Goose --airplane

A proper adjective is derived from a proper noun: French bread

NOTE: Always capitalize a family name according to the family's preference.

6. Capitalize geographical names, streets, buildings, parks and companies; regional names and nicknames; compass directions because they are proper nouns.

Missouri River

Lake Quivira

Rocky Mountains

Iowa is sometimes called the “Hawkeye State.”

JCCC is on College Boulevard.

I love picnics at Antioch Park.

The Western Electric Company has a branch office near I-35.

The South shall rise again.

but

To get to Riverside you must go north of the river.

Do not capitalize geographical words when they do not refer to a specific place.

hills, countries, mountains

7. Capitalize the proper names of all organizations, religions, races, and nationalities.

Data Processing Club

Jew

Fundamentalist

American

8. Capitalize all nouns referring to God, sacred writings, and religious observances.

God

Koran

Holy Bible

Ten Commandments

9. Capitalize national and religious holidays.

Christmas

Valentine's Day

10. Capitalize events, eras, prizes, and documents--wars, battles, historic events, treaties, documents, prizes, and important periods.

World War I

Prohibition Era

Civil War

Nobel Peace Prize

Korean Conflict

11. Capitalize civil and military titles when they precede a name. Capitalize academic degrees and their abbreviations.

Lieutenant Jones

Dr. Jones or J. Jones, Ph.D.

Do not capitalize titles when used as a general reference: *All of the lieutenants were happy to obey the order.*

12. Capitalize the first word and all important words in titles of books, plays, stories, articles, poems, musical works, journals, magazines, newspapers, television shows, and movies.

The Thornbirds

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

Readers Digest

Kansas City Star

13. Capitalize family relationship names only when they are being used as proper names.

I told you, Mom, I don't want to go.

John went with his father and mine.

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, and aunts must attend the reunion.

Practice Exercises

Mark out each incorrect small letter. Above, write a capital.

1. The elks lodge in twin forks is sponsoring a fish fry friday.
2. Make haste to help me, o Lord my salvation.--psalm 38:22
3. I love english.
4. We saluted the american flag.
5. he comes from idaho.
6. Mary is from the south.
7. We visited an indian village in Arizona last summer.
8. The secretary of state will visit our city today.
9. (letter forms} yours truly, dear mr. jones, dear mother and dad
10. For adults the high school offers courses in german, psychology, and american government.