

## General Guidelines

Use capital letters for the following:

- Names and nicknames – *Abraham Lincoln, Abe*
- Trademarks – *Coca Cola, Kleenex, Honda*
- People and languages – *Native Americans, German*
- Geographical names – *Bahamas, Africa, Third Street, Pacific Ocean*
- Organizations, government agencies, institutions, and companies – *Federal Bureau of Investigations, Western Technical College, Ford Motor Company*
- Days of the week, months, and holidays – *Monday, September, Christmas* (Seasons are not capitalized – *summer, fall*)
- Historical documents, periods, events, and movements – *World War I, Stone Age*

## Titles of People

Capitalize in the following situations:

- If the title of a person is before the person's name, then capitalize it:  
*President Barack Obama OR Captain Hook*
- If the title is printed after the name of the person, then you do not capitalize it:  
*Barack Obama, the president of the United States OR Hook, our captain*
- When you substitute a relationship for a proper name, then you capitalize it. In the first sentence below, the father's name, perhaps *Ralph*, could be used in place of "Father." That is not the case with the second sentence.  
*Tell Father that I will pick him up at noon vs. Jack's dad is basketball coach.*

## Titles and Subtitles of "Literary Works"

No matter if you are using the title of a movie or video game OR the title of a magazine or a book, the capitalization rules are the same. Almost all the words in a title, subtitle, and other titled works are capitalized. You do not capitalize coordinating conjunctions, also known as the FANBOYS—*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*; prepositions, such as *in, at, on, by, before, between, through*, etc.; and the articles *a, an, and the*, except when they are the first or last word. However, everything else in a title is capitalized.

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (book)*

*Death of a Salesman (play)*

*How the Grinch Stole Christmas (movie)*

*World of Warcraft (online game)*

*"Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" (poem)*

*The La Crosse Tribune (newspaper)*

## The First Word

Capitalize the following:

- The first word in a sentence  
*John walked his dog around the block.*
- The first word in directly quoted speech unless the quote begins mid-sentence.  
*She said, "Call me with the new plans."*  
*"Call me," she said, "with the new plans."*
- The first word in a series of questions  
*What would you like to drink? Pop? Tea? Coffee?*
- The first word in listed items that are complete sentences  
*There are three reasons you passed your midterms: (1) You got a good night sleep every night. (2) Consistent study habits helped you know the material. (3) Memorization techniques that you practiced helped you retain information.*
- The first word inside parentheses if it is a full sentence  
*Climbing trees is hard work. (This is true, unless you are a monkey.)*
- The first word after a colon if what follows the colon is a sentence.  
*One thing is bound to happen: We will eventually get out of school.*  
*There is one thing I'll never forget about my dad: his frugality.*

## Indicate emphasis

A common noun is sometimes capitalized for emphasis.

*The reason some people become stock brokers is Money.*

## Links to Additional Information

["Capitalization"](#) from Capital Community College

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