

## Capitalize this!

1. The first word of every sentence.
2. The first-person singular pronoun, *I*.
3. Words in a title, including the first (except for articles, short prepositions, "to" in an infinitive, and coordinating conjunctions)      *A Short History of Nearly Everything*
4. Proper nouns
  - Specific persons and things: *Barak Obama, the White House, General Motors Corporation*
  - Specific geographical locations: *Connecticut; Africa; Forest Park Zoo; Lake Erie, the Northeast* [Do not capitalize compass directions or locations that aren't being used as names: *the north side of the city; we're leaving the Northwest and heading south this winter.*
  - When we combine proper nouns, we capitalize words preceding place-names: *Lakes Erie and Ontario*, but not when the order is reversed: *the Appalachian and Adirondack mountains*
  - When a term is used descriptively, as opposed to being an actual part of a proper noun, do not capitalize it: *The California deserts do not get as hot as the Sahara Desert.*
  - Names of celestial bodies: *Mars, Saturn, the Milky Way*. [not *earth, moon, sun*, except when they appear when other celestial bodies are mentioned: *It is farther from Earth to Mars than from Mercury to the Sun.*
  - Names of newspapers and journals: *the Los Angeles Times* [but do not capitalize the word *the*]
  - Days of the week, months, holidays. [but not the seasons (*spring, summer, fall, autumn, winter*).
  - Historical events: *World War I, the Renaissance, the Crusades*
  - Races, nationalities, languages: *Swedes, Swedish, African American, Jewish, French,*
  - Religions and deities: *Christ, Allah, Buddha, Christianity, Judaism, Jews, Islam, Muslims*
  - Names of specific courses: *Economics, Biology 101* [not subjects: *biology, earth science*
  - Names of relationships *only* when they are a part of or a substitute for a person's name: *Grandma*
  - People's titles when they appear before a person's name: *Professor Farbman (or Professor of Physics Herschel Farbman), Mayor Perez, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell* [not when the title appears after the name: *Herschel Farbman, professor of history; Eddie Perez, mayor of the city of Hartford; Juan Carlos, king of Spain.*
  - Department and program names when they used in full: *the Department of Behavioral Sciences*
  - Don't capitalize words such as *city, state, federal, national*, etc. when used as modifiers: *There are federal regulations about the relationship of city and state governments.*
  - Words associated with the Internet -- most dictionaries capitalize *Internet, Web, World Wide Web, Web page, Web site*, etc., but the publications of some corporations, such as Microsoft, seem to be leaning away from such capitalization. The Yale Style Manual recommends capitalization. The words *e-mail* and *online* are not capitalized.
  - The capitalization of words that refer to institutions or governmental agencies, etc. can depend on who is doing the writing. If you are writing for LAVC, capitalize the word *College* to distinguish between this one and others. *The College has changed its policy many times.* If you are writing about Pierce, use lower case: *The college has a farm.*

The most important guiding principle in all such matters is **consistency** within a document and consistency within an office or institution. Probably the most thorough and most often relied upon guide to capitalization is the *Chicago Manual of Style*, but the *Gregg Reference Manual* is also recommended.