

English 6

Sequence N°: 06

Title: English capitalization rules

Objectives:

Capitalization helps students to differentiate between Therefore, proper capitalization goes beyond just following a set of rules. It significantly enhances the clarity, flow, and overall effectiveness of written communication.

Introduction:

Capitalization ([American English](#)) or **capitalisation** ([British English](#)) is writing a word with its first letter as a capital letter (uppercase letter) and the remaining letters in lower case.

1. When to capitalize

Knowing which types of words to capitalize is the most important part of learning English capitalization rules. Basically, there are three types of words you capitalize in English:

- ✓ The pronoun I ;
- ✓ The first word in a sentence or line of a letter (e.g., Sincerely);
- ✓ Proper nouns.

That last one, proper nouns, is where a lot of the confusion comes from. Some words, like the name Albert Einstein, are always capitalized; however, others are capitalized only in certain situations and are lowercase in others. For example, directions like north and west are normally lowercased but are capitalized when they're used as part of a geographic name, like the West Coast.

Let's take a closer look at what words need to be capitalized and when.

2. What words need to be capitalized?

✓ **People's names:**

Both the first and last names of a person are capitalized. Likewise, middle names, nicknames, and suffixes like Jr. are also capitalized.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson.

✓ **Titles:**

[Capitalization in titles](#) is where a lot of capitalization errors come from. The title of any piece of work—books, movies, songs, poems, podcast episodes, comic-book issues, etc.—requires capitalization, but only certain words in the title are capitalized.

What words need to be capitalized in titles? For starters, the first word in a title is always capitalized. Nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs all need to be capitalized in titles as well.

Small words like articles and prepositions are generally lowercased, unless they're the first word in a title. However, some style guides have their own preferences, so double-check if you have any doubts.

The Catcher in the Rye
Of Mice and Men

✓ **Places:**

If you're using the name of a place, capitalize it. This applies to everything from tiny Deer Creek to the massive planet Jupiter. E.g: New York City; Lake Victoria.

✓ **Countries, nationalities, and languages:**

In English, [countries, nationalities, and languages](#) are capitalized. Country names fall under the category of places, but by extension the names of the people who live there and the adjective form

of their culture are also capitalized. This includes languages. E.g: Haiti; a team of Haitians; Haitian cuisine.

✓ **Institutions (companies, brands, agencies, etc.):**

The names of companies, brands, agencies, and other large groups like hospitals are also proper nouns. Some small words like prepositions may still be lowercased in such names.

E.g: Volkswagen Group; Bank of China.

✓ **Historical eras:**

[Capitalize periods and events](#) when referring to them by their specific name but not when you're using them as general terms. If a period of time is named after a proper noun, capitalize the proper noun. The word for the period is sometimes capitalized, as in the examples below, but other times it is lowercased, as in the Victorian age; European Renaissance; Islamic Golden Age.

Generally, you do **not** capitalize the names of centuries because they are too broad.

E.g: the twentieth century

✓ **Days, months, and holidays**

In English [days and months](#) are capitalized because they are proper nouns. E.g: the first Sunday in April

✓ **Initials and acronyms:**

Initials and [acronyms](#) combine the first letters of multiple words to make a new word. Typically, these use all capital letters. E.g: WHO (World Health Organization); UFO (Unidentified Flying Object).