

HOW TO USE CAPITAL LETTERS

Lesson Objective

In this lesson, you will learn how to write capital letters. You will also learn how and when to use capitals. You'll also learn about proper nouns. Let's begin!

Note:

Another word for "capital" letters is "uppercase." Small letters are called "lowercase."

Warm-Up

A. Writing

Find a partner. Write your partner's **full name** on a piece of paper. Now write your partner's **birthdate** and **birthplace**. Circle the uppercase letters.

1. Did you circle the first letter in your partner's first name?
2. Did you circle the first letter in your partner's birth month?
3. Did you circle the first letter of your partner's birthplace?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| _____ 1. capital | a) one of 12 periods in a year (e.g., <i>January</i>) |
| _____ 2. lowercase | b) not easy |
| _____ 3. proper noun | c) an uppercase letter |
| _____ 4. common noun | d) a short form where letters represent words (e.g., BTW = <i>by the way</i>) |
| _____ 5. month | e) to copy (draw) overtop of a model |
| _____ 6. trace | f) small letter(s) |
| _____ 7. difficult | g) a general person, place, thing, or idea |
| _____ 8. acronym | h) the name of a book, movie, etc. |
| _____ 9. nationality | i) the country one is from or belongs to |
| _____ 10. title | j) a person, place, or thing with a specific name |

Types of Letters

A. Reference

	Uses	Examples
Capital Letters Big letters are called capital or uppercase letters. A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z	Use a capital letter at the beginning of every sentence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunnies are cute.
	Use a capital letter at the beginning of a proper noun. (A proper noun is the name of a person, place, or thing.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United States • July • Monday • George
	Use a capital "I" for the first person singular pronoun.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I live in New York. • Yuki and I ate apples.
	Use capital letters for first and important words in titles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great Expectations</i> • <i>The Right to Write</i> • <i>The Shadow of the Wind</i>
Lowercase Letters Small letters are called lowercase letters. a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z	Use a lowercase letter at the beginning of a common noun (unless it is the first word in a sentence).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dog • pizza • house • movie
	Use a lowercase letter for unimportant words in a title such as articles, prepositions, and conjunctions (unless it is the first word in the title).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the • a • an • of • an • at

ALL CAPS

Machines read capital letters easily, but most people don't! Do **not** type or print in all capital letters unless a form asks for ALL CAPS. An exception to this is envelopes. You **should** use ALL CAPS to write an address on an envelope.

Types of Letters cont.

B. Writing Capital Letters

Use the chart below to complete these tasks:

1. Trace the capital letters.
2. Copy the capital letters on the lines.
3. Say the letters out loud with your class.
4. Copy the four most difficult letters on the extra lines.

A _____	B _____	C _____	D _____	E _____
F _____	G _____	H _____	I _____	J _____
K _____	L _____	M _____	N _____	O _____
P _____	Q _____	R _____	S _____	T _____
U _____	V _____	W _____	X _____	Y _____
Z _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Types of Letters cont.

C. Alphabetizing Capital Letters

Fill in the missing letters.

A		C		E
F			I	J
K	L	M		O
	Q	R		T
U	V		X	
Z				

Proper Nouns

A. Using Capital Letters

We use a capital letter at the beginning of a proper noun anywhere in the sentence.

- **New York** is a big city.
- I am from **New York**.
- I live in **New York** now.

B. Examples

Here are some examples of proper nouns.

Proper Nouns	Example(s)
people or pet's names	Nancy Waters, Spot
company or brand names	Microsoft, Android
cities or towns	Ottawa
countries	United States
nationalities	American
languages	English
titles	The Wizard of Oz, Mrs., Princess Diana
names of planets	Saturn
names of bodies of water	the Pacific Ocean
names of mountains	Mount Fuji
days	Monday
months	February
acronyms	BTW (by the way)
holidays	St. Patrick's Day
religions	Islam

C. Exceptions

When referring to people by name, common nouns can become proper nouns. Here are some examples.

#	Common Nouns	Proper Nouns
1	My mother is kind.	Mother is kind.
2	I miss my grandma .	I don't think Grandma is coming today.
3	Is the president late?	I met President Obama.

Proper Nouns cont.

D. Practice

Work on your own.

Complete the chart with examples of proper nouns.

Do not use the words from page 5.

#	Proper Noun	Example
1	person's name	
2	month	
3	day	
4	language	
5	company name	
6	religion	
7	mountain	
8	city	
9	nationality	
10	planet	

E. Pair Work

Work with a partner. Compare the words

you wrote with the words your partner wrote.

Write your partner's answers in the chart below.

Check your partner's capitals!

A: What did you write for a person's name?

B: I wrote *Ella*. What did you write?

A: I wrote *Franco*.

#	Proper Noun	Partner's Example
1	person's name	
2	month	
3	day	
4	language	
5	company name	
6	religion	
7	mountain	
8	city	
9	nationality	
10	planet	

Titles

A. Using Capital Letters

We use a capital letter at the beginning of a title and for important words in titles.

Important words include:

- nouns and pronouns
- verbs and phrasal verbs
- adjectives and adverbs

B. Examples

Here are some examples of titles. Write some of your own examples in the empty boxes. Compare with a partner.

#	Titles	Example	My Example
1	movies	Planet of the Apes	
2	books	East of Eden	
3	articles	How to Teach Math	
4	songs	Pump Up the Jam	
5	albums	Like a Prayer	

C. Exceptions

Some style guides use different rules for capitalizing titles. You may see the following:

#	Rule	Example
1	All caps	PLANET OF THE APES
2	Capitals for all first letters	Pump Up The Jam
3	Capitalization of infinitives	How To Teach a Great Math Class

Common Errors

A. The Pronoun "I"

In English, the pronoun "I" is always capitalized.

- I like *coffee*.
- My *brother* and I like to *ski*.
- Can I buy you a *coffee*?

B. English

In English, languages and nationalities are always capitalized. This is not the case in some other languages. Many English learners forget to capitalize the word *English*.

- *English* is my first language.
- I know *Spanish* and *English*.
- Are you *American*?

C. First Word

In English, the first word in every sentence is always capitalized. Many new English learners forget this rule.

- My name is *Maurice*. I am from *the United States*.
English is my first language. Do you speak *English*?

Task 1

Use the model sentences to write three new sentences about yourself. Change the words in *italics* to other words. Remember to capitalize the pronoun "I."

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Task 2

Use the model sentences to write three new sentences. Change the words in *italics* to other languages and nationalities. Remember to capitalize the proper nouns.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Task 3

Use the model. Change the words in *italics* to your own information. Check your capitals!

Capitals Checklist

BEFORE YOU SEND OR SUBMIT YOUR WRITING

After you write a note, email, or assignment, check your capitalization.

- ☐ Did I begin every sentence with a capital?
- ☐ Did I capitalize the pronoun “I”?
- ☐ Did I capitalize the word *English* and other countries, nationalities, and languages?
- ☐ Did I capitalize all proper nouns (names, places, company names, etc.)?
- ☐ Did I use lowercase letters at the beginning of common nouns within a sentence?
- ☐ Did I capitalize my title or other titles correctly?
- ☐ Did I proofread my work?

Comprehension Check-In

Work with a partner and answer the following questions based on the lesson so far.

1. What are some categories of proper nouns? Name at least five.
2. What must writers do at the beginning of every sentence?
3. What pronoun always uses a capital?
4. Why is the word *mother* sometimes capitalized?
5. Why is the word *president* sometimes capitalized?
6. What did you learn about common nouns?
7. What words are always capitalized in titles?

Review

Review Task 1

WRITE THE ALPHABET

Write the capital letters of the alphabet.
Check that your letters are in alphabetical order.

Review Task 2

MY STORY

Hello! My name is _____ .
1.

_____ am _____ years old.
2. 3.

My birthday is on _____ .
4.

_____ am from _____ .
5. 6. (country)

_____y first language is _____ .
7. 8.

I am learning _____ .
9. (language)

I want to visit _____ .
10. (proper noun)

Shared Criteria for Success

Student: _____

Date	Level	Assessed By	Target Task	Skill
		<input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy Letters <input type="checkbox"/> Copy Information	Writing

Criteria	Rating	Notes
forms capital letters correctly		
follows alphabetical order		
uses proper capitalization for the pronoun "I"		
uses proper capitalization for proper nouns		
begins sentences with proper capitalization		