

*** Capitalize *proper nouns* and *words derived from them*; do not capitalize common nouns:**

Proper nouns are the names of specific persons, places, and things. All other nouns are common nouns. The following types of words are usually capitalized: *names for a deity, religions, religious followers, sacred books; words of family relationships used as names; particular places; nationalities and their languages, races, and tribes; educational institutions, departments, degrees, particular courses; government departments, organizations, and political parties; and historical movements, periods, events, and documents.*

PROPER NOUNS

God (used as a name)
 Book of Jeremiah
 Grandmother Bishop
 Father (used as a name)
 Lake Superior
 the Capital Center
 the South
 Japan, a Japanese garden
 Ohio State University
 Geology 101
 Environmental Protection Agency
 Phi Kappa Psi
 a Democrat
 the Enlightenment
 the Declaration of Independence

COMMON NOUNS

a god
 a good book
 my grandmother
 your father
 a beautiful lake
 a center of higher learning
 south of the mountain
 an ornamental garden
 a good four-year university
 studying geology
 a federal agency
 a fraternity
 an independent
 the eighteenth century
 a declaration of truth

*** Months, holidays, and days of the week are always treated as proper nouns; the seasons and numbers of the days are treated as common nouns:**

Our town fair begins on the fifteenth day in June, right after Memorial Day. I like it when it's on a Friday! It makes the weekend seem longer.

My mother's birthday is in early spring, on the fifth of May.

* Names of school subjects are capitalized only if they are names of languages. However, names of particular courses are capitalized:

This semester, Austin is taking math, geography, French, and English.

Ms. Squires and Mr. King teach Creative Writing in the second semester.

*CAUTION: Do not capitalize common nouns to make them seem more important:

Our company is currently hiring computer programmers. (not Programmers, Company, Computer Programmers, etc.)

* Capitalize the first, last, and all major words in titles and subtitles of works such as books, magazines, articles, and songs: In both titles and subtitles, major words--nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs--should be capitalized. Minor words--articles, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions--are not capitalized unless they are the first or last word in the title or subtitle. Capitalize the second part of a hyphenated term in a title if it is a major word, but not if it is a minor word:

The Country of the Pointed Firs

"A Valediction: Of Weeping"

The F-Plan

"Odysseus: The Warrior, the Husband, the Father "

* Obviously, you should capitalize the first word in any sentence:

Why are you going to the store? I just got back, and bought everything we need.

Give me thirty cents so I can call Mom. My mom is the best one in the world. She is always there for me when I call her.

* Capitalize abbreviations for government agencies and departments, other organizations, and corporations: capitalize trade names and the call letters of radio and television stations:

EPA, FBI, OPEC, IBM, Xerox, WDVE-FM, WLOS-TV, IRS, CIA