

# PROPER CAPITALIZATION

Correct capitalization is a common difficulty. Below are some hints to assist in proper capitalization:

**The first word**—In a sentence, including sentences that begin in a direct quote, always capitalize the first word used.

*This is a writing tip.*

*She told me, "This is a writing tip."*

**Proper nouns**—The names and abbreviations of specific people, places, organizations, and occasionally things—such as trademarks—should be capitalized.

*Specific* → *Utah, Great Salt Lake,*

*Dr. Pepper, BBC*

*Not specific* → *state, lake, soda, etc.*

**Other specific nouns**—Countries, nationalities, and specific languages should be capitalized, as well as national, political, racial, civic, and athletic groups.

*Great Brittan, Spanish, Democrats,*

*African-American, Utes*

**Titles**—The major words in the title of a book, article, or song, should also be capitalized not including short prepositions or articles (i.e. "the," "and," "a," "an") if they are not the first words in the title.

*Life, the Universe and Everything, by*

*Douglas Adams*

**Names and relationships**—Familial relationships and titles should be capitalized when they are used as a proper name.

*Proper* → *"Aunt Karen," "Mother,"*

*"Mayor Anderson"*

*Not proper* → *"my aunt," "your mother,"*

*"Anderson, the mayor"*

**Religious words**—Capitalize the names of specific deities, religious figures, and holy books.

*Specific* → *"God," "Ganesh," "Buddha,"*

*"the Bible"*

*Not specific* → *"the gods," "a prophet,"*

*"the religious text"*

**Time**—Days of the week, months of the year, holidays, periods and events should be capitalized, but not century numbers or seasons unless used in a title.

*Specific* → *"Monday," "Revolutionary*

*War," "the Spring 2006 semester"*

*Not specific* → *"eighteenth century,"*

*"spring"*

**The pronoun "I."**

The Community Writing Center (CWC) has numerous books to aid with capitalization and grammar techniques in your own writing. Additionally, CWC Writing Assistants are available to assist you in any stage of your writing process. Just ask to sign up for an appointment.

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