

Capitalization

Beginning of Sentence

The beginning of a sentence is the first letter of the first word in a sentence. This letter should always be capitalized.

Here are examples of capitalizing sentence beginnings:

Incorrect: that monkey has an orange tail.

Correct: That monkey has an orange tail.

Here are two more examples:

Incorrect: will you get the Sunday paper out of the mailbox?

Correct: Will you get the Sunday paper out of the mailbox?

Incorrect: why is Kenji yelling at you?

Correct: Why is Kenji yelling at you?

Practice:

It may be helpful to give the student sample sentences that begin with lowercase letters. Choose sentences from any of the student's textbooks or reading materials. Have the student insert correct capitalization where necessary. Below are some incorrectly written sentences to get the student started.

Incorrect Sentences:

1. what is your favorite pizza topping?
2. finally, my parents have agreed to buy me a pony.
3. my best friend, Sitso, is the new captain of the Mathletes.
4. packing for a camping trip is a difficult task.
5. after school, Jamilah and Hisho are heading to the swimming pool.

Capitalization – Edit

Capitalization skills have been mastered when the appropriate use of capital letters in sentences, titles, and quotes can be demonstrated.

It may be helpful to develop a story written entirely in lowercase letters. Help the student insert the correct capitalization. The following is an example:

No Capitalization: we went to see dr. oswald.

With Capitalization: We went to see Dr. Oswald.

Days: Isolation

To correctly capitalize days of the week and months of the year, the student should remember that the first letter of those words is always written with a capital letter.

The following should be capitalized:

Days of the Week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

Months of the Year: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December

Holidays: Capitalize all words except articles (a, an, the) and prepositions (in, on, of, etc.).
Look at the following examples:

Without Articles or Prepositions

-Flag Day, New Year's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day

With Articles or Prepositions

-the Fourth of July

Seasons, on the other hand, are never capitalized. These include winter, spring, summer, fall, and autumn.

Practice:

It may be helpful to review the basic rules of capitalization with the student. Practice applying the above rules by writing sentences that contain days of the week, months of the year, holidays, and seasons. Help the student insert correct capitalization where necessary.

Days: Sentence

To correctly capitalize days of the week, months of the year, holidays, and seasons, the student should remember that all of those words begin with a capital letter.

Correct capitalization includes:

Days of the Week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday

Months of the Year: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December

When capitalizing holidays, capitalize the first word, last word, and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. Articles (a, an, the) and prepositions (in, on, of, etc.) are not capitalized.

Holidays

Examples of holidays without articles or prepositions

Flag Day, New Year's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day

Examples of holidays with articles or prepositions

Fourth of July, Cinco de Mayo

Seasons, on the other hand, are never capitalized unless they are personified. These include winter, spring, summer, fall, autumn, wintertime, etc.

Example of seasons without personification

"I am heading to music camp this summer, so I can do well in my band class this fall."

Example of seasons with personification

"The Summer, with her warm weather, kept us at the beach."

"The icy hands of Winter left our cheeks rosy."

Practice:

It may be helpful to review the basic rules of capitalization with the student. Have the student practice applying the above rules by writing sentences that contain days of the week, months of the year, holidays, or seasons. Help the student insert correct capitalization where necessary.

The student can practice capitalization skills by creating cards for a holiday he or she is familiar with. Have the student use crayons, glitter, markers, stickers, etc. to decorate the card, using correct capitalization for the holiday. When the project is complete, the student will not only have successfully practiced capitalization, but he or she will also have created a holiday card that can be shared with friends and family.

Geographical/Directional Terms

At this grade level, the student will be able to identify which geographical and directional terms require capitalization and which have been capitalized incorrectly. Here are some rules to keep in mind:

Compass Directions

Compass directions include **north, south, east, west, southeastern, western, etc.**

Do not capitalize terms which refer to directions given. For example: "The geese fly south for the winter." Also, do not capitalize adjectives that come from words showing direction.

For example:

We saw alligators in southern Florida.

My mother learned to make rhubarb pie in western Mississippi.

Directional Terms as Geographical Locations

These terms include **the Far East, the South, the Western Hemisphere, the Southwest, etc.**

These terms refer to specific places. For example, "I am going to the South for the holidays to see my relatives in Louisiana." These terms are always capitalized.

Geographical Features and Regions

These terms include **Amazon River, Grand Canyon, Andes Mountains, Great Lakes, Mount Rushmore.**

These terms are always capitalized.

Practice:

The student should practice word recognition in order to master this skill. By recognizing key words in geographical and directional terms, the student will be able to edit and revise an error.

Ask the student to pinpoint geographical terms from a map, or a globe, or within their history books. By memorizing these terms and their appearances, the student can become more familiar with their correct capitalization. Some examples that the student should commit to memory are listed below.

Examples of Geographical/Directional Terms:

Rocky Mountains, South Africa, West Germany, Middle East, Mount Fuji, the National Mall (in Washington, D.C.), the White House, New York City

Letter: Greeting/Closing

At this level, the student will be able to correctly select an appropriate greeting and/or closing for a letter.

A greeting is a way to say hello to the person you are writing to. It is also called a salutation. A closing is a way to end or complete the letter you are writing. It can also be called a goodbye or a farewell.

Greetings

Capitalize the first word, all nouns, and all personal titles in a greeting. Follow a friendly greeting with a comma (,) and a formal greeting with a colon (:).

1) Friendly greetings:

- Ex. Dear _____ , To _____ , My Friend, Dear Friends,

2) Formal greetings:

Dear Sir: , Ladies: , Dear Sir or Madam:

Closings

Capitalize only the first letter in the first word in a closing. Use a comma at the end of the closing.

1) Friendly Closing:

- Ex. Love, Your friend, Affectionately,

2) Formal Closing:

- Ex. From, Sincerely, Yours truly, Sincerely yours, Yours sincerely, Cordially yours, Very truly yours, Yours very truly, Regards, Best wishes, Respectfully yours, With all best wishes, With warmest regards,

Practice:

The best way for the student to practice capitalizing greetings and closings of letters is to have him or her first practice writing letters. Ask the student to correspond with several different people. This will allow the student to use various greetings and closings. The student can master the salutation and farewell of a friendly letter, an invitation, and a thank-you note. Help the student write the letter, leaving the greeting and closing for the end. When the letter is complete, ask the student to explain the emotion behind the writing. Encourage the student to choose an appropriate greeting and closing to suit the letter's purpose.

Here is an example to help you begin. Have the student read through the letter and then select a greeting and closing that would fit the author's intent.

_____ Principal Rappaport,

I wanted to write you this letter to thank you for letting our school have a book sale. I love to read. Having a book sale in our school gym is an easy way for me to buy new books. I am very excited for the sale to start. Thank you again for letting Tiger & Company Publishers have their event in our gym.

_____,
Donovan Owlet

Names

At this grade level, the student will learn to capitalize the first letter in a person's first and last name and capitalize familial terms correctly.

First and Last Names

For first and last names, the student should remember that **only** the first letter in each name is capitalized.

For example:

Incorrect: My name is belay cheche.

Incorrect: My name is BELAY Cheche.

Correct: My name is Belay Cheche.

Incorrect: I am talking to my sister rayna.

Incorrect: I am talking to my sister RAYna.

Correct: I am talking to my sister Rayna.

Familial Relationships

Familial relationship names include words such as mom, dad, aunt, uncle, cousin, grandmother, and so on.

When writing these words, it is important for the student to remember that they are capitalized when they stand in place of a person's name, job, or position, or when it is part of the person's specific name or title, such as Aunt Keisha.

If the noun is used after a possessive word, such as *my*, *your*, *her*, *his*, or next to *a* or *the*, it is not capitalized.

For example:

This is my aunt.

This is Aunt Marie.

Here are other examples:

Incorrect: I am going fishing with uncle Richard.

Correct: I am going fishing with Uncle Richard.

Incorrect: I was knitting with grandpa Jose.

Correct: I was knitting with Grandpa Jose.

Practice:

It is important for the student to recognize names and how they are capitalized. It may be helpful for the student to practice by writing sentences that contain proper names and familial relationships. Additionally, it may be helpful to encourage the student to write letters or notes to specific people. For example, a letter could describe what the student did over the weekend, and it should contain the names of all the people with whom the student interacted.

Example:

Incorrect:

Dear aunt toni,

I am writing to you from my Mother's house. Right now, mom and I are sitting in the kitchen, trying to cool off from the hot weather. Soon, I will go to the community pool with my friend, rohan whittaker. We will see my Cousin, jack, and my Grandmother. I hope that the lifeguard, yolanda adams, is working. She is always very nice to rohan and me. Well, that is all. I hope you are well, since you are my favorite Aunt.

Always,
delcia

Correct:

Dear Aunt Toni,

I am writing to you from my mother's house. Right now, Mom and I are sitting in the kitchen, trying to cool off from the hot weather. Soon, I will go to the community pool with my friend, Rohan Whittaker. We will see my cousin, Jack, and my grandmother. I hope that the lifeguard, Yolanda Adams, is working. She is always very nice to Rohan and me. Well, that is all. I hope you are well, since you are my favorite aunt.

Always,
Delcia

Personal Titles

Civil, military, religious, and professional titles, as well as titles of nobility become personal titles when they are written before a personal name.

Personal titles must be capitalized when they come before a personal name.

Examples:

Captain Rambaugh marched into battle.
I asked Professor Schiano a question.
Mayor Ramirez tries to fight crime in his city.
Princess Claude of France was King Louis XII's daughter.

Initials or abbreviations that stand for those titles should also be capitalized.

Examples:

Reverend John Martin or Rev. John Martin
Doctor Manuella Rodriguez or Dr. Manuella Rodriguez
General Agbese or Gen. Agbese

When a title is not used with a personal name, that title is not capitalized.

Examples:

The captain of the ship is not steering.
I am nervous to meet our new history professor.

There are twelve candidates running for mayor.

For the costume ball, I wore a princess crown, and my brother wore a king's cloak.

It is important to note: Speaker of the House is always capitalized, regardless of whether or not it is followed by a specific name.

Practice:

To help the student better understand how to recognize and capitalize personal titles, it may be helpful to create flash cards with examples of personal titles written on them. This will help the student recognize the actual word or words that are considered personal titles.

Here are some examples of personal titles:

Civil Titles include **President** Kennedy, **Congresswoman** Baird, **Chief Justice** Earl Warren, **Senator** Lamonte

Military Titles include **General** Custer, **Lance Corporal** Mare, **Sergeant** Gray, **Private** Goldberg

Religious Titles include **Rabbi** Walker, **Pastor** Richard, **Pope** John Peter, **Father** Thomas, **Friar** Tuck

Professional Titles include **Doctor** Kones, **Professor** Clair, **Judge** Plum, **Officer** Scarlet

Titles of Nobility include: **Prince** Harry, **Queen** Maria, **Emperor** Chen, **Duke** Iwuoha

Remind the student that personal titles should be capitalized only when they are followed by a specific name. Have the student use the flash cards to write different sentences, one utilizing capitalized personal titles, "I ran into Sergeant Gray on the baseball field," and one that does not need a capitalized title, "I saw the sergeant running bases during a baseball game."

Pronoun "I"

The student is expected to capitalize the letter *I* when it is used as a pronoun. A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence: *he, she, them, we, it, mine, I, she, etc.*

Example: Hector caught the ball. "**I** caught the ball," he said.

Both *I* and *he* take the place of the name David. Both *I* and *he* are pronouns.

In order to correctly capitalize the pronoun *I*, a student must determine whether *I* is being used as a word or as part of a word. The letter *I* is always capitalized when it is used as a pronoun, even if it is not at the beginning of a sentence.

The pronoun *I* always refers to a person.

Ex. Kiyoshi and **I** play baseball.

The pronoun *I* is also capitalized when it is used in a contraction:

I had -> I'd

I am -> I'm

I would -> I'd

I will -> I'll, etc.

Ex. If **I'd** known we were having pizza for dinner, **I'd** have come home sooner.

A common mistake a student makes is to capitalize the letter *i* when it is not being used as a pronoun.

For example:

Incorrect: My favorite color Is blue.

Correct: My favorite color is blue.

Practice

To help a student understand when to capitalize the pronoun *I*, have him or her write an autobiographical paragraph. An autobiographical story is a story you write about yourself. The student should refer to himself or herself using the pronoun *I*. Encourage the student to contract phrases like "I am," "I had," "I should," and "I will." After the paragraph is finished, have the student use a marker or highlighter to circle each *I* that is used as a pronoun. This will help the student comprehend the difference between an *I* used as a pronoun and an *i* that is simply used as a letter.

Proper Nouns

A noun is a person, place, thing, or idea.

A proper noun names a specific person, place, or thing. Proper nouns are always capitalized.

Proper nouns include places, eras or events, names, and languages. Note: articles (*a, the, an*) and prepositions (*in, of, on, etc.*) are not capitalized. Correct capitalizations of proper nouns include the following:

Places:

Alice's Barber Shop, Steak and Potatoes Restaurant, Rockaway Public Library, the Mall of America, etc.

Eras and Events:

World War I, the Roaring Twenties, Dark Ages, the Korean War, the Persian Gulf War, Generation X, the Great Depression, etc.

Names:

John Ritter, Celia Cruz, Salvador Dali, Genghis Khan, Eva Peron, Martin Luther King, Jr. etc.

Languages:

Russian, Spanish, English, Italian, Vietnamese, Urdu, Creole, Mandarin, Yiddish, etc.

Practice

It may be helpful to review the basic rules of capitalizing for proper nouns and proper adjectives with the student. Practice applying the above rules by having the student write sentences that contain the names of places, eras and events, names, and languages. Help the student insert correct capitalization where necessary.

Additionally, you may want to ask the student to walk to various locations in his or her neighborhood. It can be helpful for the student to see proper nouns and proper adjectives "in action." Ask the student to notice the names and descriptions given to popular restaurants, libraries, schools, buildings, and street signs. The student can also look through newspapers or magazines, noticing the differences between a reference to "Northport High School" and one that mentions the "high schools in Northport."

Quotations

At this level, the student should be able to recognize a word that is capitalized correctly or incorrectly when used in a direct quotation.

Here are some basic rules to keep in mind.

A direct quotation records someone else's exact words.

The first word of a direct quotation is capitalized if the quotation is a complete sentence; if it is a fragment, it is not capitalized.

For example:

George Washington once said, "I cannot tell a lie."

My mother told me, "Never go outside with wet hair."

The principal warned us, "Anyone caught cheating will be punished."

All she could remember of his speech were the following words: "...and that is how a pair of shoes made me who I am today."

A divided quote is a direct quotation broken into two parts by words such as *he asked* or *she said*. The first word of the second part is not capitalized unless it begins a new sentence.

For example:

"This puppy," Gitana said, "is the one I want to buy."

"Who," asked Isis, "broke my bat?"

Practice

Ask the student to choose several passages of dialogue from his or her favorite book, magazine, poem, short story, or even comic strip. Duplicating a passage without the quotation marks, ask the student to correctly place quotation marks where he or she feels the dialogue begins and ends. The student should use the capitalization of certain words as clues. Additionally, instead of removing the quotation marks, you can have the student work on a passage that is written entirely in lowercase letters, thereby requiring him or her to edit and revise the passage.

State/City/Street

At this level, the student is expected to capitalize streets, cities, and states correctly.

All words in the names of streets, cities, and states are capitalized.

Here are some examples of street names:

123 Lovely Lane

Note that the word *Lane* is capitalized because it is part of the name of a street

My best friend also lives on Pine Street.

My best friend lives down the street from me.

Notice that in the third example *street* is not capitalized. Do not capitalize the word *street* if it is not part of a specific street name.

Here are some examples of city names:

Oklahoma City
She lives in San Diego.
Portland
Las Vegas

Here are some examples of state names.

South Carolina
My friend moved to New Mexico.
I saw a porcupine in Washington.
New Mexico

Here is the correct format for an address.

3984 Oakhurst Avenue
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009

Practice

It is important that the student understand how to capitalize street, city, and state names. One way to help the student practice this skill is have him or her identify street, city, and state names. Using an old newspaper or magazine, have the student locate and circle the names of streets, cities, and states. Once the student has found at least five of each type of name, have him or her copy the names down by category. Then, choosing a name from each category, have the student create five fake addresses. Here is an example.

Street names

- Oak Street, Pine Lane, Willow Road, Aspen Drive, Mulberry Court

City names

- Los Angeles, Dallas, Miami, Baltimore, Kansas City

State names

- New Hampshire, Michigan, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota

Fake Address:

Jill Smith
296 Oak Street
Baltimore, Michigan 04821

Titles

At this level, the student should be able to correctly capitalize the titles of books, magazines, and newspapers.

When capitalizing titles, it is important for the student to remember that each word in the title will be capitalized except the following:

Do not capitalize articles unless they are the first or last word in a title. Articles are *a*, *an*, and *the*.

Do not capitalize coordinating conjunctions unless they are the first or last word in a title.

Coordinating conjunctions are: *and*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *nor*, and *for* (when it is used as "because").

Do not capitalize prepositions unless they are the first or last word in a title. Some prepositions include *between*, *under*, *above*, *in*, *on*, *with*, *of*, *for*, *to*, *over*, and *beneath*.

Book Titles

Incorrect: We read cooking pasta for the whole family for our home economics class.

Correct: We read Cooking Pasta for the Whole Family for our home economics class.

Incorrect: Does the library have racso and the rats of nimh available for check out?

Correct: Does the library have Racso and the Rats of Nimh available for check out?

Magazine Titles

Incorrect: My mother receives how to tend to your perfect garden each month in the mail.

Correct: My mother receives How to Tend to Your Perfect Garden each month in the mail.

Incorrect: Uncle Victor subscribes to the trouble with being in between.

Correct: Uncle Victor subscribes to The Trouble with Being in Between.

Newspaper Titles

Incorrect: My cousin, Yousef, paid thirty-five cents for the boston globe.

Correct: My cousin, Yousef, paid thirty-five cents for The Boston Globe.

Incorrect: Angelina delivers new york newsday each morning.

Correct: Angelina delivers New York Newsday each morning.

Practice

A good way for the student to practice capitalizing titles is to compose creative titles for items around the house. The student will need markers, crayons, and construction paper. Using these supplies, have the student make signs for specific articles or rooms. Though these items will not be newspapers, magazines, or books, this activity will help the student learn which words in titles are capitalized and which words are not.

Here are some examples:

Instead of *the kitchen*, use The Place Where Dad Once Burned the Chicken.

Instead of *my favorite sneakers*, use Shoes I Wear When I Need a Boost.

This activity can be enjoyable for all, since it will require both creativity and correct capitalization skills.

Here are additional examples for the student to use when practicing capitalization.

1. the room where my baby brother sleeps
2. the cat's favorite toy
3. a baseball mitt I used in third grade
4. this is the best shampoo in the world
5. the remote control that we can never find