

CORRECT CAPITALIZATION



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Introduction

At Vernondale Christian Academy our approach to teaching English language conventions is based on a less-than-earth-shattering observation—repetition leads to learning.

Accordingly, our days always begin with brief oral and written exercises that give students reoccurring opportunities to learn, apply and review linguistic (phonics, syntax, semantics and pragmatics), grammar, punctuation and capitalization skills; assisting them in writing and editing their own work and preparing them for standardized test taking. In terms of capitalization, this is especially important given the vast number of circumstances in which this knowledge is required.

The ultimate goal at Vernondale is to help each student achieve **retention**—a permanent mental record of the information to be learned. Our primary means of accomplishing this task is the effective use of *organization* and *meaningfulness*.

Organization means simplifying or arranging the many separate details of complex or interrelated material into just a few “chunks” of information. Key to this strategy is organizing the information in such a way that each individual detail in a given chunk serves as a cue for all the others.

And the secret to our effectiveness in the applying this technique is that we never expect our students to learn anything we haven't already mastered ourselves—enabling us to discover and share with our learners what, for us at least, proved to be the most effective process, or most efficient pathway, to reaching our final destination...acquiring a given body of knowledge.

When it came to capitalization, we found the most helpful organizational model was dividing the dizzying array of regulations and guidelines into seven categories: (1) first words, (2) organizations, (3) people, (4) places, (5) publications, (6) times, and (7) miscellaneous. The first half of this booklet will present all of the guidelines using this model.

The second half of the book will roughly follow the sequence adopted by the California Board of Education, presenting the information pretty much as listed in the state's grade-level standards. We believe however that our approach at Vernondale—having students first memorize seven categories, a relatively easy task—gives them a hook, or framework, on which to hang the plethora of capitalization minutia to follow, serving as a kind of "fishing rod" to reel in details that tend to sink below the surface of short-term recollection while processing the information into the vessel of long-term memory.

Unit 1

Capitalize the **first word** in each of the following:

A typical adult can learn the eight subcategories under “first words” in a matter of minutes, though students of course may require at *least* eight days (one rule per day, obviously) if not eight *weeks*. (No rush—you’ve got all year—and the goal here is to learn these *once* and never have to worry about *forgetting* them!)

1. Capitalize the first word in a sentence

EXAMPLE: Your science reports are due next week.

2. Capitalize the first word in a complete sentence that follows a colon

EXAMPLE: We all came to the same conclusion: The game was lost.

3. Capitalize the first word in a quote when it is a complete sentence.

EXAMPLE: The children responded, “Let’s go to Disneyland!”

4. Capitalize the first word in an independent question within a sentence.

EXAMPLE: The question is, Are we going in the right direction?

5. Capitalize the first word in each line of a poem.

6. Capitalize the first word in the salutation or greeting of a letter.

EXAMPLE: Dear Barbara,

7. Capitalize the first word in the complimentary close of a letter.

EXAMPLE: Yours truly,

8. Capitalize the first word of each item in an outline or list.

EXAMPLE:

- Go to the post office
- Buy groceries
- Pick up dry cleaning

Capitalize the Names of Organizations

Capitalize the names of organizations, businesses and institutions.

EXAMPLES:

My brother worked for General Electric a total of 16 years.

Are all members of the American Medical Association doctors?

The above rule include Internet search engines, service providers, commercial online services, Web sites, online communities and online databases, some of which may have a special style (called intercaps) or may be acronyms.

EXAMPLES:

I can use Google to find virtually any information I need.

When capitalizing the names of organizations and products written with intercaps (or BiCaps), follow the organization's or product's style in each case.

Over 5 million people use EarthLink as their Internet service provider.

How does playing on AstroTurf differ from playing on grass?

I prefer to use NutraSweet in my coffee.

I usually purchase PlaySkool toys as gifts for my nieces and nephews.

Capitalize names of religions, their members, their buildings, sacred works, and references to a supreme being, including *pronouns* referring to a supreme being.

EXAMPLES:

True Christians acknowledge God as Creator of the universe.

They see worshiping and delighting in Him as their chief purpose in life.

I understand that Temple Beth Shalom is a traditional Jewish synagogue.

The theme of the Kaddish is the magnification and sanctification of God's name.

I first read the entire Old Testament as a nine-year-old Methodist child.

Capitalize shortened forms of the names of national and international bodies as well as their major divisions.

EXAMPLES:

Will the **H**ouse reconvene in January? (Short for *House of Representatives*)

A **B**ureau agent is questioning her. (Short for *Federal Bureau of Investigation*)

Our appeal is being heard by the **C**ourt. (Short for *United States Supreme Court*)

Capitalize the Names of People

Capitalize each part of a person's name.

EXAMPLE: Henry David Thoreau is one of America's great authors.

Capitalize nicknames and imaginative names of people, organizations, and places.

EXAMPLES:

The dignitaries had lunch with the First Lady of the United States.

They say you can't fool Mother Nature.

Business is booming for Ma Bell, now that the economy is gathering momentum.

Our class is going to visit the Big Apple on our next field trip.

Connecticut was designated the Constitution State by the General Assembly.

Most people living in the Silicon Valley plan to stay there a while.

Capitalize the derivatives of names used as proper adjectives, but not if the derivatives no longer depend on the proper noun for meaning.

EXAMPLES:

My brother is a Shakespearean actor.

This milk may be pasteurized, but it's still sour. (Derived from *Louis Pasteur*)

Capitalize titles in front of people's names, but not when used alone (except when placing your title or position on the next line under your name at the end of a business letter).

EXAMPLES:

I received no reply from Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Dr. Hutchins, Mayor Young, and Ms. Paul are pressuring the governor for results.

Capitalize titles or degrees *after* a person's name as well, but NOT if acting as a description.

EXAMPLES:

Tonight's speaker will be Fernando Marquez, **Ph.D.**

I received no reply from Arnold Schwarzenegger, governor of California,

We all respect Mr. Young, mayor of our peaceful little town.

Capitalize *other* abbreviations after a person's name, too (in addition to degrees).

EXAMPLE: Many people admire Dr. Martin Luther King, **Jr.**

Capitalize the titles of parents or relatives used as names. (In other words, capitalize them when they are not preceded by a possessive word).

EXAMPLES:

I forgot that **Dad** and **Uncle Jim** went fishing in Montana.

I forgot that my dad and your uncle Jim went fishing in Montana.

Capitalize names of races and racial adjectives.

EXAMPLE: Not every **Caucasian** is aware of **African-American** concerns.

Though not a name per se, always capitalize the pronoun "I"

EXAMPLE: The last time **I** saw Jerry was two years ago.

Capitalize the Names of Places

Capitalize the name of geographical places and regions.

EXAMPLES:

Aunt Hillary visits Europe every summer.

The explorer craft landed on Mars without a single glitch.

I understand that people from the South are known for their friendliness.

I learned that Lake Michigan affects the local climate.

The state of Wisconsin is known for its cheese.

She said she's climbed Mount Kilimanjaro a total of three times.

It seems as if some kind of trouble is always brewing in the Middle East.

Capitalize the names of languages, countries, nationalities, and names associated with specific geographic locations.

EXAMPLES:

Students with a well-rounded education are very familiar with Latin root words.

I spoke Russian when I was little, but have completely lost the language.

We are proud to be citizens of the United States of America.

I think I'll have some Canadian bacon for breakfast.

Did you see any Europeans while you were at Universal Studios?

Capitalize words referring to people from a region.

EXAMPLE:

Last December we were visited by a Northerner trying to escape the cold.

The emergence of modern science is often credited to Western civilization.

Capitalize geographic places and regions, as well as their derivatives, when used as proper adjectives.

EXAMPLES:

The chef took special delight in preparing **G**reek dishes.

What percent of North Americans are **F**rench-speaking Canadians?

However, do not capitalize geographic places or regions and their derivatives used as proper adjectives if they no longer depend on the proper noun from which they came for meaning.

EXAMPLES:

We're buying some french fries at McDonald's.

I'm going to close the venetian blinds so that the room stays cool this afternoon.

She needs some india ink for her art project.

Capitalize the short forms of geographic places which are clearly associated with the specific place.

EXAMPLES:

I tried to swim the **C**hannel and failed miserably. (Short for *English Channel*)

The **C**ontinent has lost many immigrants to America. (*European Continent*)

They've accomplished nothing on the **H**ill this year. (Short for *Capitol Hill*)

This economic downturn took the **S**treet by surprise. (Short for *Wall Street*)

Capitalize the names of buildings.

EXAMPLES:

Anyone visiting France as a tourist is sure to visit the **E**ffel **T**ower.

The **E**mpire **S**tate **B**uilding is no longer the tallest building in New York.

Capitalize "the" when it is part of the legal name of an organization or place, particularly in legal or formal contexts.

EXAMPLES:

General Quackenbush is in route to **T**he Hague on urgent business.

With the names of confidential sources having recently been leaked, a number of offices at **T**he New York Times are being swept for bugs and wiretaps.

Capitalize the **Names of Publications**

There are two basic capitalization styles for displayed headings, one of which states you are NOT to capitalize prepositions—regardless of length—unless they are the first or last words in the title or subtitle.

However, the style which seems to be used most often states that the first, last, and major words in the titles of literary and other creative works (such as books, articles, and songs), are always capitalized—as are ALL words with four letters or more—even if they are prepositions.

Words that are not considered to be major are quite simply the articles, conjunctions, and prepositions less than four letters in length.

Examples of short articles are "a," "an," and "the." (Actually, these are the *only* articles.)

Examples of short conjunctions are: *and, as, but, if, nor, and or.*

Examples of short prepositions are: *at, by, for, in, of, off, on, out, to, and up.*

These words are NOT capitalized unless they are the first or last word in the title.

But remember, all other words—even if short—including verb forms like *is* and *be* (unless part of an infinitive), are indeed capitalized.

In short, capitalize the titles of books and their parts (chapters, etc.), magazines, newspapers, poems, articles, songs, paintings, musical compositions, plays, musicals, movies, television shows, and other creative works.

EXAMPLE:

One of Jerry's favorite books is *The Catcher in the Rye*.

You will find "The Old Man's Carousal" on page 17 of *An American Anthology*.

Book series and editions are capitalized as well.

EXAMPLE:

The **M**odern **L**ibrary, a current division of Random House publishers, was founded in 1917.

Though the titles of periodicals are capitalized, in common practice, the stipulation that the definite article “the” be capitalized *when it is the first word in a title* is disregarded in reference to newspapers (as well as other periodicals, vessels, airships, trains, and firm names).

EXAMPLES:

The article first appeared in the Washington Post.

In my opinion, the New York Times is one of the most liberal papers in America.

I'm told that the U-3 is scheduled to depart at 6:00 a.m.

There is a package I need to pick up from the National Photo Co.

Capitalize computer software titles, programming languages, and operating systems, unless an acronym (which is full capitals).

EXAMPLE:

She is proficient with Microsoft Word, but not with Excel.

I had to learn COBOL to continue writing programs for my company.

How does Yahoo! handle Internet security?

Capitalize names of historical and legal documents.

EXAMPLE:

Was the Magna Carta signed by any famous historical figures?

Almost everyone is familiar with the First Amendment.

Of course, the rules on pages 7 through 14 can be summarized by simply stating that you should capitalize all proper nouns, which of course, are the names of any particular people, places, or things.

Capitalize Times

When it comes to time abbreviations, you have the option of either using small capitals (with or without periods):

EXAMPLE: I got up this morning at 6:00 **AM**.

...or using lower case letters *with* periods:

EXAMPLE: We plan on eating dinner at 6:00 p.m.

Also, capitalize days of the week and months of the year

EXAMPLES:

I'm waiting until **T**uesday to take my car into the shop.

We all have birth dates in **F**ebruary.

Capitalize holidays, historical periods, and special events.

EXAMPLES:

The significance of **G**ood **F**riday is a mystery to many unbelievers.

What costume are you going to wear on **H**alloween?

Someone made a movie based on animals that lived during the **J**urassic era.

If the **G**reat **D**epression was as bad as they say, I'm glad I missed it.

This year we are studying about the **I**ndustrial **R**evolution.

Do not capitalize the names of seasons unless they are being personified.

EXAMPLES:

This winter has been bitterly cold.

I'm entering the **A**utumn of my life.

They could hardly wait for the summer baseball season to begin.

Thank goodness **S**pring has come to bless us with her life-giving showers.

Miscellaneous Capitalizations

Capitalize awards and medals.

EXAMPLES:

They recently awarded the Nobel Prize to the former vice president, Al Gore.

My grandfather was awarded the Purple Heart during World War II.

Capitalize mottoes.

EXAMPLES:

Is the motto "Out of Many, One" related in any way to the term *university*?

Capitalize names of specific educational courses (i.e., followed by a number).

EXAMPLES:

All freshmen are required to take English Literature 101 their first semester.

I'm enrolled to take Algebra II in the spring.

Capitalize names of specific historical events, ages and eras, as well as the imaginative names assigned to such historical periods.

EXAMPLES:

My grandfather was awarded the Purple Heart during World War II.

Judging from your description you must be referring to the Pleistocene Era.

The Reformation was significant for what reasons?

I'm glad I was born after the Great Depression was over.

Capitalize nouns followed by a number or letter indicating sequence.

EXAMPLES:

There's a documentary airing on **C**hannel 30 that I have to watch for homework.

You'll find the charts you need by turning to **A**ppendix E.

Capitalize satirical or humorous observations called "laws."

EXAMPLES:

According to **M**urphy's **L**aw, whatever *can* go wrong *will* go wrong.

I believe it's **P**arkinson's **L**aw which states that "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion."

Capitalize the proper nouns and adjectives in scientific laws.

EXAMPLES:

I understand that **N**ewton's first law of motion is sometimes referred to as the law of inertia.

A principle known as **M**endel's law of segregation states that allele pairs separate or segregate during gamete formation, and randomly unite at fertilization.

Wording in signs and advertising is often capitalized.

EXAMPLE: **J**azz **F**estival **T**oday!

The names of sporting events are capitalized as well.

EXAMPLES:

My father hasn't missed a **S**uper **B**owl in over 20 years.

I missed the **W**orld **S**eries because I was in the hospital having brain surgery.

Who won the **S**eries? (Short for *World Series*)

Capitalize trademarks, proprietary names, names of commercial products, market grades, and brand names.

EXAMPLES:

The **B**and-**A**id emergency kit is in the cabinet over the sink.

I'd like a glass of **P**epsi-**C**ola if it's available.

My mother refused to make **J**ell-**O** when I was a kid.

Who was the inventor of **K**leenex facial tissues?

Are **X**erox copy machines still the best?

My uncle stakes his reputation on **K**razy **G**lue's ability to fix anything.

NOTE: Some trademarks, proprietary names, or names of commercial products have become clearly established as common nouns. You should therefore check an up-to-date dictionary or check with the International Trademark Association at www.inta.org to verify the correct spelling.

Unit 2

First grade

Capitalize the first word in a sentence.

EXAMPLES:

This is a lovely day.

Where are we going for dinner?

Pick up that pencil.

Watch out for the rocks!

Always capitalize the pronoun "I."

EXAMPLE:

The last time I saw him was two years ago.

Second Grade

Capitalize all proper nouns (i.e., names).

A **proper noun** is the **name** of a particular person, place, thing or organization.

EXAMPLES:

I work at the **L**arimore **M**anufacturing **C**ompany.

We have to cross the **S**askatchewan **B**ridge.

Her mother is a member of the **S**upreme **C**ourt.

I was born in **D**allas, **T**exas.

The explorers sailed across the **P**acific **O**cean.

We joined an organization called **B**rotherhood of **C**hrist **S**eekers.

Rule 3 still applies—even when a proper noun is used as an **adjective**.

EXAMPLES:

Our **H**ungarian car broke down on the way to Bridgeport.

The **C**hicopee Metatrons defeated the **N**ewark Green Demons 26 to 11.

A **J**apanese soldier rescued the starving infant.

This **A**ugust heat wave is unbearable.

The shops in the **K**orean precincts were all damaged by the floods

She suffered from a **F**reudian slip of the tongue.

(Formed from the name *Sigmund Freud*)

EXCEPTION: Do NOT capitalize the names of things that *came* from specific things, but are now *general types*.

The milk may have been pasteurized, but it was still sour.
(Formed from the name *Louis Pasteur*)

I prefer barbecue sauce on my french fries as opposed to ketchup.
(Formed from the word French)

The lettering on the advertisement was all in italics.
(Formed from a variation of the word Italy)

Capitalize abbreviations of proper nouns.

EXAMPLES:

My favorite shows are all on the **NBC** network.
(Abbreviation for *National Broadcasting Company*)

The speaker will address an assembly of **UN** ambassadors at 8:00 P.M.
(Abbreviation for *United Nations*)

Capitalize family relationships (when used as proper names).

I sent a thank-you note to **Aunt Abigail**, but not to my other aunts.

Here is a present I bought for **Mother**.

Did you buy a present for our mother?

(In the above sentence “mother” was not used as if it were a name. People wouldn’t normally say, “*Did you buy a present for our Charley?*” They would simply ask, “*Did you buy a present for Charley?*” The key is to watch out for possessive pronouns.)

Capitalized any title when used as a direct address.

EXAMPLE:

Can you examine my child now, **D**octor?

Capitalize titles and people's initials.

The above rule refers to a person's title when it precedes his or her name (including the titles of high-ranking government officials), but not when acting simply as a description following the person's name.

EXAMPLES:

At this time the floor belongs to **C**hairperson Demetrio.

Mr. Demetrio, chairperson of Charcoal Inc., will commence the meeting at noon.

Dr. **F. W.** Callahan, **P**h.**D.**, is a former assistant of **G**overnor Schwarzenegger's.

Harold Scott, **J**r. got no reply from Mr. Schwarzenegger, governor of California.

The president should respond to his constituents' concerns.

None of the senators bothered to show up.

The governors, mayors, and county officials all called for a special investigation.

Governor Robinson, **M**ayor Gonzales, and **C**ouncilman Bartholomew all attended the funeral of Robbie Robinson, a noted dignitary.

NOTE: There is one exception to the above rule. Even though it appears afterward, you should nonetheless capitalize a person's title when it follows the name on an address or signature line.

EXAMPLE:

Sincerely,
Mr. Charlie Carlton, **C**hairperson.

Capitalize the first word of a salutation.

EXAMPLE:

Dear Mr. Buchwald:

My dear Mrs. Huckleberry:

Capitalize the first word of a complimentary close.

EXAMPLES:

Best wishes,

Sincerely,

Very truly yours,

With warm regards,

Capitalize days of the week, months of the year and holidays.

Capitalize the holidays, the months, and the days of the week, but do not capitalize the seasons unless personified or used in a title.

EXAMPLES:

We all went out trick-or-treating on Halloween.

No one's mowed the lawn since last October.

We won't be able to go until Friday at the earliest.

This year we've had a really bitter winter.

I love it when spring arrives in the flowers begin to bloom.

I'm entering the Autumn of my life.

They could hardly wait for the summer baseball season to arrive.

Thank goodness Spring has come to bless us with her life-giving showers.

I won't be able to enroll until the Fall 2008 semester.

She bought every fashion she saw from the Spring 2007 collection.

Third Grade

Capitalize geographic and direction names.

Capitalize the names of countries, nationalities, and specific languages, but only capitalize points of the compass (north, south, east, and west) when they refer to *specific* regions (as sections of a country).

EXAMPLES:

I am vacationing in **C**osta **R**ica this summer.

She speaks **F**rench fluently.

The Patterson's moved to the **S**outhwest.

Go east four blocks and then turn north.

We live in the northwest part of town.

Also keep in mind that personal, national and geographic names, as well as the names derived from them, are often NOT capitalized when used with a non-literal meaning or after having become no more than general types.

EXAMPLES:

Do you want powdered sugar or maple syrup on your french toast?

This masterful drawing was produced with nothing more than india ink.

The title of the book was written in italics.

The workmen are installing the french doors for our patio.

The children were served graham crackers and orange juice for snack.

Such proper nouns or adjectives ARE capitalized however (usually) when they occur in a food name:

EXAMPLES:

I'd like to have some **B**oston brown bread, if you don't mind.

We need a bit of **R**ussian dressing for our salads.

Please put two slices of **S**wiss cheese on my sandwich.

This **W**aldorf salad is the best I've ever tasted!

That's all well and good, but how are we to determine when the meaning of the word is still dependent on the part derived from a personal, national, or geographic name...and when is it not?

The answer is not always clear, and consequently, you as the author will often have to decide for yourself. But whatever choice you make, you should insure that you follow it consistently throughout a given document or work.

Now, though only indirectly related to geographic locations, we're going to go ahead and mention that you should also capitalize members of national, political, racial, social, civic, and athletic groups.

EXAMPLES:

My uncle played for the Green Bay Packers.

What percent of the United States population consists of African-Americans?

We will not tolerate Anti-Semitic remarks in this classroom!

I don't believe the Democrats think very highly of President Bush.

I joined Friends of the Wilderness through a direct mailing they sent to my house.

We read that the Chinese were hosting the 2008 Summer Olympics.

We're getting a little bit off track. Nonetheless, let's note that you should capitalize the words *state* and *federal* when used as part of an official agency name or in government document. Do NOT capitalize them however if they are only being used as general terms.

EXAMPLES:

This state is overly involved in our personal lives.

That crime is a federal offense.

Collecting sales tax is the function of the State Board of Equalization.

I think the Federal Bureau of investigation performs a critical service.

We keep veering further and further away from geographic terms, but this is as good a place as any to mention that you may capitalize words such as *department*, *bureau*, and *office* (as well as any other word intended to substitute for the entire name of an organization) if you have prepared your text in the following way:

EXAMPLE:

The Bureau of Veterans Affairs (Bureau) has some jurisdiction over the delivery of medical care. However, the Bureau is finding its administrative role in this area to be extremely challenging.

Capitalize holidays, historical periods, and special events.

EXAMPLES:

The significance of Good Friday is a mystery to many unbelievers.

What costume are you going to wear on Halloween?

Someone made a movie based on animals that lived during the Jurassic era.

If the Great Depression was as bad as they say, I'm glad I missed it.

This year we are studying about the Industrial Revolution.

Do you pay any attention to Groundhog Day?

How is your family observing Yom Kippur?

We don't have to go to school on Veterans Day.

Generally speaking, you should NOT capitalize mere descriptive appellations, though there seems to be significant disagreement as to which days qualify and which do not.

Be sure to perform your civic duty on election day.

I'm going to watch the president's speech on inauguration day.

Fourth Grade

Capitalize the major words in the titles of books, etc.

There are two basic capitalization styles for displayed headings, one of which states you are NOT to capitalize prepositions—regardless of length—unless they are the first or last words in the title or subtitle.

However, the style which seems to be used most often states that the first, last, and major words in the titles of literary and other creative works (such as books, articles, and songs), are always capitalized—as are ALL words with four letters or more.

Words that are not considered to be major are quite simply the articles, conjunctions, and prepositions that are either one, two or three letters in length.

Examples of short articles are "a," "an," and "the." (Actually, these are the *only* articles.)

Examples of short conjunctions are: *and, as, but, if, nor, and or.*

Examples of short prepositions are: *at, by, for, in, of, off, on, out, to, and up.*

These words are NOT capitalized unless they are the first or last word in the title.

But remember, all *other* words—even if short—including verb forms like *Is* and *be* (unless part of an infinitive), are indeed capitalized.

In short, capitalize the titles of books, magazines, newspapers, poems, articles, songs, paintings, musical compositions, plays, musicals, movies, television shows, and other creative works.

EXAMPLE: One of Jerry's favorite books is *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Capitalize the first word in direct quotes when appropriate.

When a quotation is not syntactically dependent on the rest of the sentence (in other words, when it forms a complete sentence all on its own), the initial letter is capitalized (note the punctuation).

EXAMPLE: Franklin advised, "Strike while the iron is hot!"

When a quotation is used as a syntactical part of a sentence, it begins with a lowercase letter, even though the original is a complete sentence beginning with a capital.

EXAMPLE: Franklin's advice to "strike while the iron is hot" was well taken.

Fifth Grade

Following are capitalization situations not previously covered.

Capitalize Periods and events (but not century numbers)

EXAMPLES:

I identify somewhat with the sensibilities of the Victorian Era

If the Great Depression was as bad as I hear, I'm glad I wasn't there.

What great task was accomplished at the Constitutional Convention?

The museum's collection of sixteenth century art was stolen.

Capitalize references to holy books, religious figures, specific deities, and the one supreme God.

EXAMPLES:

I go to church to worship God.

We pray to God the Father, through God the Son.

I hope you're aware of that the Virgin Mary was just as human as the rest of us.

You'll find that the Bible contains the answers to life's most important questions.

I saw several followers of Buddha assembling outside the temple.

Do NOT capitalize the non-specific use of the word "god."

EXAMPLE: Of course, any god of the ancient Egyptians was no god at all.

Such words as gee, gosh, golly, by crimony, egad, and gadzooks are all curses mangled to finesse the Third Commandment, which prohibits taking the name of the Lord in vain. The English language has a rich tradition of Third Commandment evasions, of which capitalization decisions are one.

But of course, it is impossible to fool God with capitalization tricks, so electing not to capitalize phrases like *god-forsaken* or *by god* as an attempt to obscure the reference to God is nothing but foolishness. Such expressions should be capitalized, but at Vernondale Christian Academy, you are expected to find some **alternative** phrase, rather than disrespect or dishonor God's name.

Capitalize the names of specific course titles (those followed by a number).

EXAMPLES:

I still need to take history and Algebra II.

I signed up for Psychology 101.

Capitalize trademarks

EXAMPLES:

I made a Pepsi ice cream float, but it doesn't taste all that great.

She hopped on her Honda motorcycle and took off down the street.

I like product from IBM because it is reliable.

I can barely recall how we manage to survive so many years without Microsoft Word.

Capitalize when two or more sentences follow a sentence ending with a colon.

EXAMPLE:

I love Joan Pearson's writing: Her book, *A Dollar a Day*, was wonderful. Also, *What to Do about Your Brother* was clever.

However, do NOT capitalize when only **one** sentence follows a sentence ending with a colon.

EXAMPLE:

I love Joan Pearson's writing: her book, *A Dollar a Day*, was wonderful.

Also, do NOT capitalize after a sentence ending with a colon if he begins a list.

EXAMPLE:

These are my favorite foods: chocolate cake, spaghetti, and artichokes.

Do NOT capitalize the generic designation of institutions or companies when used in isolation.

EXAMPLES:

I'll be attending the university in the fall.

I have to go to school now.

My company will be going out of business in less the six months.

When it comes to capitalizing hyphenated compounds **in titles**, always capitalize the first element, but only capitalize the second element if it is a noun or proper adjective, or if it has equal force with the first element.

EXAMPLES:

Twentieth-Century Literature

Tool-Maker

Non-Christian

City-State

Cross-Training

EXPLANATION: The word “training” is a noun formed from a verb, known as a gerund.

Do NOT capitalize the second element if it is a participle modifying the first element or if both elements constitute a single word.

EXAMPLES:

English-speaking People

Medium-sized Library

E-flat Minor

Re-establish

Self-sustaining Reaction

Hands-on America

EXPLANATION: The word “on” is neither a noun nor a proper adjective. It is a preposition (or more properly, a particle). Also, hands-on constitutes a single word.

Multi-skilled

EXPLANATION: The word “skilled” is neither a noun nor a proper adjective (it is an adjective formed from a verb, known as a past participle), nor does it have equal force with the first element. Also, the word "multi-skilled" is one simple multi-part word—not a compound word.

Summary

Capitalize the **first word** in each of the following:

1. Capitalize the first word in a sentence
2. Capitalize the first word in a complete sentence that follows a colon
3. Capitalize the first word in a quote when it is a complete sentence.
4. Capitalize the first word in an independent question within a sentence.
5. Capitalize the first word in each line of a poem.
6. Capitalize the first word in the salutation or greeting of a letter.
7. Capitalize the first word in the complimentary close of a letter.
8. Capitalize the first word of each item in an outline or list.

Capitalize the **Names of Organizations**

Capitalize the names of organizations, businesses and institutions.

Capitalize shortened forms of the names of national and international bodies as well as their major divisions.

Capitalize names of religions, their members, their buildings, sacred works, and references to a supreme being, including *pronouns* referring to a supreme being.

Capitalize the Names of People

Capitalize each part of a person's name.

Capitalize nicknames and imaginative names of people, organizations, and places.

Capitalize the derivatives of names used as proper adjectives, but not if the derivatives no longer depend on the proper noun for meaning.

Capitalize titles in front of people's names, but not when used alone (except when placing your title or position on the next line under your name at the end of a business letter).

Capitalize titles or degrees *after* a person's name as well, but NOT if acting as a description.

Capitalize *other* abbreviations after a person's name, too (in addition to degrees).

words,

Capitalize names of races and racial adjectives.

Though not a name per se, always capitalize the pronoun "I"

Capitalize the Names of Places

Capitalize the name of geographical places and regions.

Capitalize the names of languages, countries, nationalities, and names associated with specific geographic locations.

Capitalize words referring to people from a region.

Capitalize geographic places and regions, as well as their derivatives, when used as proper adjectives.

However, do not capitalize geographic places or regions and their derivatives used as proper adjectives if they no longer depend on the proper noun from which they came for meaning.

Capitalize the short forms of geographic places which are clearly associated with the specific place.

Capitalize the names of buildings.

Capitalize "the" when it is part of the legal name of an organization or place, particularly in legal or formal contexts.

Capitalize the **Names of Publications**

There are two basic capitalization styles for displayed headings, one of which states you are NOT to capitalize prepositions—regardless of length—unless they are the first or last words in the title or subtitle.

However, the style which seems to be used most often states that the first, last, and major words in the titles of literary and other creative works (such as books, articles, and songs), are always capitalized—as are ALL words with four letters or more—even if they are prepositions.

Words that are not considered to be major are quite simply the articles, conjunctions, and prepositions less than four letters in length.

Examples of short articles are "a," "an," and "the." (Actually, these are the *only* articles.)

Examples of short conjunctions are: *and, as, but, if, nor, and or.*

Examples of short prepositions are: *at, by, for, in, of, off, on, out, to, and up.*

These words are NOT capitalized unless they are the first or last word in the title.

But remember, all other words—even if short—including verb forms like *Is* and *be* (unless part of an infinitive), are indeed capitalized.

In short, capitalize the titles of books and their parts (chapters, etc.), magazines, newspapers, poems, articles, songs, paintings, musical compositions, plays, musicals, movies, television shows, and other creative works.

Book series and editions are capitalized as well.

Though the titles of periodicals are capitalized, in common practice, the stipulation that the definite article “the” be capitalized *when it is the first word in a title* is disregarded in reference to newspapers (as well as other periodicals, vessels, airships, trains, and firm names).

Capitalize computer software titles, programming languages, and operating systems, unless an acronym (which is full capitals).

Capitalize names of historical and legal documents.

EXAMPLE:

Was the **Magna Carta** signed by any famous historical figures?

Almost everyone is familiar with the **First Amendment**.

Of course, the rules on pages 7 through 14 can be summarized by simply stating that you should capitalize all proper nouns, which of course, are the names of any particular people, places, or things.

Capitalize Times

When it comes to time abbreviations, you have the option of either using small capitals (with or without periods), or using lower case letters *with* periods:

Also, capitalize days of the week and months of the year

Capitalize holidays, historical periods, and special events.

Do not capitalize the names of seasons unless they are being personified.

Miscellaneous Capitalizations

Capitalize awards and medals.

Capitalize mottoes.

Capitalize names of specific educational courses (i.e., followed by a number).

Capitalize names of specific historical events, ages and eras, as well as the imaginative names assigned to such historical periods.

Capitalize nouns followed by a number or letter indicating sequence.

Capitalize satirical or humorous observations called "laws."

Capitalize the proper nouns and adjectives in scientific laws.

Wording in signs and advertising is often capitalized.

The names of sporting events are capitalized as well.

Capitalize trademarks, proprietary names, names of commercial products, market grades, and brand names.

NOTE: Some trademarks, proprietary names, or names of commercial products have become clearly established as common nouns. You should therefore check an up-to-date dictionary or check with the International Trademark Association at www.inta.org to verify the correct spelling.