

Capitalisation

There are clear rules for the use of upper case letters or “capitals”:

1. *Titles*. The first letters of titles are always capitalised (this includes the titles of journals and books which are also printed in *italics*). However, prepositions, articles and conjunction words are *excluded* from being capitalised unless they follow a colon (:). For example:

- *Computer Crime: A Study of Security Systems and their Weaknesses*
- *Journal of Marketing*

2. *Qualifications*. The first letters of qualifications are always capitalised (again, excluding prepositions and conjunction words). For example:

- Graduate Diploma of Education (or Grad Dip Ed)
- Master of Arts (or MA) [NB: An apostrophe is needed, but no capitals, are required when mentioning the degree in general: *He received a master's degree* but not when being specific: *He was awarded a Master of Arts.*] (See our helpsheet on **Apostrophes**)
- Doctor of Philosophy (or PhD, or Ph.D)

3. *Personal Titles*. The first letters of individual titles are always capitalised. For example:

- Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, Professor, Rev, Prime Minister, President, Governor General

4. *Institutions*. The first letters of institutions are always capitalised (again, prepositions, articles and conjunction words are excluded). For example:

- Monash University
- University of Western Australia

5. *Sentences within Sentences*. The first letter of a sentence within another sentence takes a capital. For example:

- She turned to him and said: “Go away!”.

6. *Countries, States and Territories.* The first letter of a country, state, province or territory is capitalised. For example:

- Victoria, South Australia, Northern Territory, the United States of America

7. *Companies and Organisations.* The first letter of a company is capitalised. For example:

- Microsoft, the Ford Motor Company

8. *Directions and Places.* The first letter of directions are capitalised. For example:

- South-East, North-West, Northern Queensland, the Far-East

9. *Proper Names.* The first letter of proper names are always capitalised. For example:

- John Smith, Richard Harris, David Dickson. [pay attention to prefixes which can vary: van Gelder or Van Gelder]. This applies to other proper nouns like languages, English, French, Arabic.

10. *Periods of History/Days of Week/Months.* When part of a proper name the first letters of a period of history are also capitalised. For example:

- The Age of Reason, the Baroque Period. Days of the week/months are too, e.g., Wednesday, March.

11. *When not to capitalise.*

Note that capitals are NOT used in sentences where a title, organization or a company is not being identified as such:

- I am studying at university ... (here a particular university is not referred to)
- A professor of engineering said ... (a particular professor is not referred to)
- The archbishop argued that ... (a particular archbishop is not referred to)
- The company's headquarters are (a particular company is not referred to)
- The wind came from the south-west ... (a particular place in the south-west is not referred to).

Source: Murray-Smith, S., (1990), *Right Words*. Ringwood: Penguin, pp. 66-67.

