

# Guidelines for Capitalization

The purpose of this guide is to inform you when to capitalize words. To capitalize means that the first letter of the word is written in uppercase.

If after reading the following guidelines, you come across a word, which is not covered here, or if you are unsure whether you should capitalize that word or not, then consult a dictionary. There will be example sentences that will allow you to ascertain whether you should capitalize the word or not.

## Know when to capitalize

The following are some common rules you should keep in mind when deciding whether to capitalize a word or not.

### 1. **The first word of a sentence**

As you can already see within this sentence, and the many sentences written before this, the first letter of the first word (here ‘A’ in ‘as’) is capitalized. Most spellcheckers will automatically capitalize the first word in a sentence.

### 2. **First person pronoun (I)**

The first person pronoun (I) is the only pronoun that will be capitalized regardless of its position within a sentence.

### 3. **Proper nouns**

Proper nouns are the names of specific places (Saddar Market, Empress Market, Clifton Beach), countries (Pakistan, China, Britain), nationalities (Pakistani, Chinese, British), people’s names (Ahmed, Imaan, Noor), languages (Korean, Urdu, Persian), organizations/companies/groups (Microsoft Word, Intel, Slum Dwellers International, Doctors Without Borders), and brand names (Pepsi, Honda).

#### 4. **Gods, religions, religious figures, and sacred text/s**

The names of all religious deities and sacred objects associated with them will be capitalized. For example,

Buddha/Buddhism

Bible

Krishna

#### 5. **Titles**

Ensure that all titles (Mr., Mrs., Mayor, Sir, Emperor, etc.) that come before names are capitalized. For example,

*Baburnama* was penned to preserve and exalt the life of Emperor Babur

#### 6. **Days, months, seasonal holidays**

The names of days, months and holidays are proper nouns so be sure to capitalize them. For example,

Friday

Eid-ul-Fitr

Valentine's Day is celebrated in February.

Seasons, however, are not proper nouns, so you would write *summer*, *spring* etc., without capitalizing them.

## 7. Significant Events and periods

When certain momentous events take place they are usually capitalized. Similarly, time periods as markers of a singular quality (or event) affecting a certain duration of time, which can be as small as decades and long as millennia, are also capitalized. For example,

World War 2 (WWII)

Great Depression

Cold War

Centuries, and the numbers before them are not capitalized. For example,

The Wars of the Roses took place in the fifteenth century.

## 8. Quotes

The first word in a quote is capitalized when it is a complete sentence. For example,

Asma said, “A cat can never out charm a dog.”

However, don’t capitalize the first word of partial quotes. For example,

Asma described the dog as “immensely playful and charming.”

## 9. Titles of books, movies, songs etc.

In general, you should capitalize all the words in a title except for prepositions, articles and conjunctions. However, some style guides say to capitalize conjunctions and prepositions that are longer than five letters.

For example,

*The House on Mango Street*, though published not so long ago, is considered a classic by many.

The first book in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series is *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.



## 10. Words derived from a proper noun

Capitalize words that are derived from a proper noun and still depend on it for their meaning. For example,

Shakespearean

Foucauldian (Michel Foucault is the name of a French philosopher whose texts and methods of understanding the world are given great import, thus when we use a method developed by Michel Foucault, we use the word ‘Foucauldian’ to pay homage to Foucault).

However, don’t capitalize words that are derived from proper nouns that no longer depend on it for their meaning. For example, **french fries** and **pasteurize**.