Capitals

Why capitalization? Generally, capitals are used to emphasize or call attention to a significant word or group of words.

Here are some rules of capitalization:

1. Capitalize proper nouns (words that refer to specific places, persons, or things).

   Ex: As Lehi Jackson drove his Edsel down Rosebud Street, the people of St. George laughed.

   Note: A word created from a proper noun is also capitalized.

   Ex: We speak of the American way of life, but often forget the European influence.

2. Capitalize a title used as a part of a person’s name.

   Ex: Judge Glorman introduced President Carter to Chairman Martin.

   Warning: Do not capitalize a title that is not part of a person’s name.

   Ex: The judge introduced Mr. Roberts, the president of the company, to a professor by the name of Martin.

   Exception: A few titles are always capitalized.

   Ex: President (of the United States), the Pope, the Queen of England, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. For LDS writers, Prophet is always capitalized when the word refers to the head of the LDS church.

3. Capitalize names of family relations when they are used as part of a name or when they replace someone’s name:

   Ex: At the picnic, Grandmother gave the blueberry pie to Uncle Clark.

   Warning: Do not capitalize names of family relationships when they do not refer to a specific relative or when they are preceded by a possessive such as my, his, etc.
Ex: An uncle baked a pie for my mother.

4. Capitalize a word referring to a specific place, such as a city, country, lake, river, or region.

Ex: The captain directed his ship up the Mississippi River towards Columbus, Ohio; he hoped he would eventually reach the Great Lakes of the United States.

Note: When North, South, East, or West refers to a specific location, the word should be capitalized; however, if it refers only to a direction, the word is not capitalized.

Ex: The man said, “Live in the South, son.” But stubborn as usual, I headed west.

5. Capitalize names of specific institutions.

Ex: Many of the 25,000 students who attend Brigham Young University study at the Harold B. Lee Library.

Note: Do not capitalize names of general institutions.

Ex: I attend a university, but my brother attends high school.

6. Capitalize school courses that are numbered or that are derived from languages.

Ex: Most universities schedule dozens of freshman courses; in fact, this fall French, English, Philosophy 105, and Mathematics 112 are all offered.

Note: Do not capitalize a general, non-language course.

Ex: I need two history courses, one math class, and a philosophy class to complete my general requirements.

7. Capitalize specific calendar events or periods of time.

Ex: It was Monday, the 25th of December—Christmas!—but it might as well have been Labor Day, for I was writing a paper about the Civil War.

Note: Do not capitalize seasons of the year—winter, spring, summer, fall, autumn.
8. Capitalize a specific brand name or trademark.

   Ex: I was sold on the little o’s, so I bought Cherrios.