Microlab 2-Capitalization (The Handout)

Capital letters occur so often in our writing that we hardly give them a second thought. When necessary capitals are missing, however, we immediately notice their absence. Can you imagine a history book, for example, telling about ancient turkey? Knowing when to use capital letters is an important part of making meaning clear.

This microlab will help you:
- understand the correct use of capitals
- recognize and repair capitalization errors
- use capital letters correctly in your own writing

Review of Capitalization

Capital letters serve two general purposes:

I. Capitals signal the beginning of sentences and direct quotations beginning with a capital.
   
   Keeping her temper, she muttered, 'How nice."

II. Capitals identify proper nouns (nouns naming specific people, places, and things).
   
   people:    Hank Aaron, Joan Rivers
   places:    Cincinnati, Yosemite
   things:    Bendix Corporation, Harvard University

   Notice that words derived from proper nouns are also proper adjectives.
   
   proper noun,   proper adjective
   Iowa,         Iowan
   Shakespeare,  Shakespearean
   New York,     New Yorker

III. Use a capital letter for the pronoun and its contractions.

   I, I'd, I'm, I've

IV. Capitalize names, initials, and titles preceding names.

   Bob Carter,     Doctor Johnson,     Gov. Sill
   Professor Stein, Ms. Lile,     Judge Holme

   A title not followed by a name is not usually capitalized.

   The judge read the verdict.
   My professor was late.

V. Capitalize the names of family relationships when the relative is named.

   Uncle Able,    Grandpa Niles

   The family relationship is not capitalized when preceded by a possessive pronoun (my, our, your, her, his, their).

   My uncle Able visited last week.
   Her grandfather arrives tomorrow.

VI. Capitalize names of proper places like cities, states, and specific geographical areas.

   Lake Huron,    Boston,    Kentucky
   the South,     Times Square,    Yuma

   Words like "lake" and "street" are not capitalized when they do not name a specific place.

   We decided to hike south to the lake.