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4 Capitalization

4.01 Introduction

Capital letters have three basic uses, of which nearly all others may be regarded as particular cases: (1) to give emphasis, as in official titles and initial words; (2) to distinguish proper nouns and adjectives from common ones; and (3) to highlight words in headings and captions.

In English the first letter of certain words is capitalized to give emphasis and to clarify sentence structure and meaning for the reader. This chapter gives rules to define which words require capitals, but editorial practice varies considerably on this subject, depending on the desired degree of formality, the intended readership and the organization's house style.

In order to ensure consistency in your own style, follow the rules below, which apply to most general types of writing, and consult the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*, which gives the upper-case use of many words. Capitalization in specialized documents should be based on professional style guides.

4.02 Initial words

(a) Capitalize the first word of a sentence or sentence equivalent:

- There are no other constraints.
- Come.
- What a pity!
- Why?
- Exit
- All rights reserved

(b) Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation that is itself a complete sentence:

- The candidates said, "We are in favour of a free vote on the death penalty."

Do **not** use the upper case if the quotation is merely a sentence fragment or is worked into the structure of the sentence:

- The candidates said that they were "in favour of a free vote on the death penalty."

In quotations where historical, legal, documentary or scientific accuracy is crucial, reproduce upper-case letters as faithfully as possible.

For more detailed information on quotations, see [Chapter 8 Quotations and Quotation Marks](#).

(c) Capitalize the first word of a complete sentence enclosed in parentheses when it stands alone, but **not** when it is enclosed within another sentence:

- The speaker concluded by citing facts and figures to support her contention. (Details may be found on p. 37.)

but

- The increasing scarcity of the species is attributable to overfishing (statistics will be found in the appendix), to acid rain and to other factors outlined in the report.

(d) Capitalize the first word of a direct question within a sentence:

- The question to be asked in every case is this: Does the writer express himself or herself clearly?

Consistently capitalize (or lower-case) parallel sentence fragments used as questions:

- Will farmers be taxed under this plan? Lumberjacks? Trappers?
- Will farmers be taxed under this plan? lumberjacks? trappers?

Do **not** capitalize words that normally introduce questions (*who*, *why*, *when*, *how*) when they stand alone as verb complements:

- He knew he had to meet the deadline. The question was how.

(e) Capitalize the first word after a colon if it begins a direct question (see [4.02 Initial words](#)(d) above) or a formal statement, introduces a distinct idea, or is followed by more than one sentence:

- There are several possibilities: For example, the Director General might resign.
- The jury finds as follows: The defendant is guilty as charged on all counts.
- Our position is clear: We will not permit new landfill sites in our region.
- In conclusion, I answer the question asked at the outset: Revenues will be greater this year than in the past three years. However, they will not match expenditures.

See [Chapter 7 Punctuation](#) for further information on use of the colon.

(f) The word following a question mark or exclamation mark may or may not be capitalized, depending on how closely the material it introduces is considered to be related to what precedes:

- What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!
- Progress where? or, even more fundamentally, progress for whom?
- What factors contributed to the decline of Rome? Did the barbarian invasions play a significant part?

(g) Capitalize the first words of truisms and mottoes run into text:

- His watchword was Learn to write well, or not to write at all.
- Her motto in life is Do unto others . . . before they do unto you.

(h) The personal pronoun *I* and the vocative *O* are always capitalized in English; *oh* is capitalized only when it begins a sentence or stands alone.

(i) The first word of a line of poetry is traditionally capitalized, but some modern poets do not follow this practice. It is therefore best to check the original and respect the poet's preference.

4.03 Personal names

(a) Capitalize proper nouns and epithets that accompany or replace them:

- John Diefenbaker
- Margaret Thatcher
- Peter the Great
- the Sun King

(b) When *O'* forms part of a proper noun, it and the first letter after the apostrophe are capitalized:

- O'Brien
- O'Malley

(c) When the particle *Mc* or *Mac* forms part of a name, the letter *M* is capitalized. Capitalization and spacing of the letters that follow may differ and individual preferences should be respected:

- McDonald **or** MacDonald **or** Mac Donald **or** Macdonald

(d) Individual preferences regarding the capitalization and spacing of articles and particles in French or foreign names should also be respected when they can be ascertained.¹ The following are correct forms:

- Walter de la Mare
- Ethel Vandenberg
- John Dos Passos
- Cornelius Van Horne
- Pierre de Savoye
- Paul DeVillers

(e) In the case of historical figures, treatment in English may differ from that in the original language, and no real standard appears to exist. Consistency in treating a particular name (such as *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Luca della Robbia* or *Vincent van Gogh*) is all that can be aimed for. In some cases, the most familiar form of the name omits the particle entirely:

- Beethoven (Ludwig van Beethoven)
- Torquemada (Tomás de Torquemada)

(f) Capitalize a nickname (a word or phrase used as part of, or instead of, a personal name):

- the Chief
- the Rocket
- the Iron Lady

Similarly, capitalize names of fictitious or anonymous persons, and names used as personifications:

- Johnny Canuck
- Paul Bunyan
- the Caped Crusader
- John Bull

• ¹ *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* is an excellent source of such information.

4.04 Words derived from proper nouns

As a general rule, capitalize an adjective derived from a proper noun or a name used adjectivally:

- Canadian whisky
- Digby chicken
- Franciscan friar
- Newtonian physics

Proper adjectives are associated with the person or place from whose name they are derived. When this association is remote, the adjective becomes common and in most cases no longer takes a capital, as illustrated below:

- bohemian lifestyle
- chinaware
- manila envelope
- platonic relationship

Verbs derived from proper nouns are also capitalized unless their association with the proper noun is remote:

- Anglicize
- Russify

but

- italicize
- vulcanize

Check proper noun derivatives carefully, however. Usage in this regard is not standardized.

4.05 Governments and government bodies

(a) Capitalize the titles of international, national, provincial, state, regional and local governments; the titles of government departments and agencies and their organizational subdivisions; the names of boards, committees and royal commissions; and *the Crown* when it means the supreme governing authority:

- the United Nations
- the Government of Canada
- the Parliament of Canada
- the House of Commons
- the Senate of Canada
- the Public Service Commission
- the Department of Citizenship and Immigration
- the Public Affairs Section
- the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee
- the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences

Note that both the legal title and the applied title of a federal department are capitalized:

- Department of the Environment
- Environment Canada

(b) It is in the use of short forms that the greatest uncertainty arises. Short forms are normally written in lower case when used in a non-specific sense, when preceded by a possessive, demonstrative or other type of adjective, and when used adjectivally or in an adjectival form:

- We have formed a committee to study the matter.
- Our section held its monthly meeting yesterday.
- This division has 60 employees.
- The Canadian (federal, provincial, present) government has issued a policy statement.
- An interpretation of the departmental rules and regulations is required.
- The question of parliamentary procedure was raised.
- Unfortunately division practice proscribes such an approach.
- The decision was based on government (governmental) policy.

However, when short forms of government bodies stand for the full title and are intended to carry its full force, they are usually capitalized. This style is almost always used in in-house documents:

- The Government has adjourned for the summer.
- The Minister's message was circulated throughout the Department.

If the short title is a specific term which the organization shares with no other body within the government concerned, that title retains the upper case when used adjectivally:

- the question of Senate reform
- some House committees

(c) The word *Government* is capitalized when it refers to the political apparatus of a party in power. It is lower-cased when it refers in a general way to the offices and agencies that carry out the functions of governing:

- The Liberal Government introduced this measure.
- It is government policy not to discuss matters before the courts.

(d) Do **not** capitalize the plural forms of *government*, *department*, *division*, *etc.*, even when the full titles of the bodies concerned are given:

- Representatives from the departments of Finance, National Defence and Natural Resources were present.

4.06 Institutions

(a) Capitalize the official names of organized churches (religious denominations, sects, orders) and their adherents, universities, school boards, schools, courts of law, clubs, corporations, unions, alliances, associations, political parties, *etc.*:

- Canadian Airlines International
- Lisgar Collegiate Institute
- the Canadian Medical Association
- the First Baptist Church
- the International Court of Justice
- the New Democratic Party
- the Opposition (official)
- the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- the Quebec Superior Court
- the Rotary Club
- the Supreme Court of Canada
- the University of Manitoba

The official capitalization is that used by the institution itself.

(b) The names of administrative subdivisions of these institutions are also capitalized:

- the Department of Political Science
- the Toronto Synod

(c) A generic noun used as a short form of a title is often capitalized, especially in corporate writing:

- the Institute
- the Board
- the Party

(d) Capitalize short forms that use only the specifying element:

- This afternoon, Concordia and Western will play in the final.

(e) Do **not** capitalize generic short forms used in a non-specific sense, preceded by a possessive, demonstrative or other type of adjective, or used adjectivally or in an adjectival form:

- The university is our town's major employer.
- Our family attended a Baptist church regularly.
- She tries to attend all board meetings.
- Only strict adherence to the party line was tolerated.
- Every board of education in the province has adjourned for the season.

(f) But, if the short form refers to a specific, unique institution, it retains the upper case when used as a noun or adjectivally:

- The Scouts held a rally over the weekend.
- A city-wide Red Cross blood drive replenished the hospital's supply.

(g) Documents intended for an internal readership often capitalize terms that would be lower-cased in writings of a general nature:

- He worked for the Company for almost forty years.
- The document was forwarded to the Regional Office.

(h) In second and subsequent references, short forms may be treated generically and lower-cased:

- He was invited to address the Second Annual Conference on Biotechnology but declined because the conference was not sufficiently broad in scope.
- She applied for a grant under the External Scholars Program, but only graduate students were eligible under the program.

(i) Do **not** capitalize the plural of common nouns, even when the full titles of the bodies concerned are given:

- He held degrees from the universities of Saskatchewan and Toronto.
- Candidates for the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties attended the rally.

4.07 Political parties and movements

Adjectives and nouns referring to the ideas, actions, documents and members of specific political parties, movements and groups are capitalized. Capitalization often helps distinguish these terms from the same words used descriptively:

- a Liberal policy paper (*of the Liberal government or party*)
- New Democrats
- a Progressive Conservative government (*refers to the Progressive Conservative Party*)

but

- the liberal arts

- a conservative on moral issues

Capitalize the word *party* when it is preceded by the official name of a political party, unless it is used as a generic term:

- He was a member of the Social Democratic Party.
- A new agrarian party was founded at the rally.

General terms describing political movements and their adherents are lower-cased unless they are derived from proper nouns:

- fascism
- democracy
- Marxist
- Thatcherite

4.08 Titles of office or rank

(a) Capitalize civil, military, religious and professional titles and titles of nobility when they precede and form part of a personal name:

- Archbishop Gervais
- Finance Minister Paul Martin
- General de Chastelain
- Lord Carrington
- Pope John Paul II
- President Clinton
- Prime Minister Chrétien
- Professor Layton
- Queen Elizabeth II

(b) Capitalize all titles following and placed in apposition to a personal name, except those denoting professions:

- Clare Smith, Director of Public Affairs
- Ron Irwin, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

but

- Jane Tanaka, professor of physics

(c) Capitalize a title referring to a specific person and used as a substitute for that person's name, even if it is a short form:

- the President of the Treasury Board
- the Chief, Public Affairs Section
- the Leader of the Opposition
- According to the Assistant Deputy Minister, this is a unique agreement.
- They discussed the matter with the Colonel.
- The Archbishop made no further comment.

(d) Do **not** capitalize spelled-out titles in the plural or titles preceded by an indefinite article:

- the lieutenant-governors of Quebec and Ontario
- a member of Parliament

but

- the Member for Winnipeg North Centre

(e) Capitalize abbreviated titles in the plural:

- We met Profs. Sami and Nicolet.

(f) Do **not** capitalize titles modified by a possessive or other type of adjective, or by an indefinite article:

- They discussed it with their colonel.
- They discussed it with the former ambassador.
- They discussed it with the Canadian prime minister.
- They discussed it with a member of Parliament.

(g) Capitalize titles only when they refer to a specific person; do **not** capitalize a term that refers to a role rather than a person:

- As prime minister [*that is, while occupying a certain position*], Lester Pearson introduced the new Canadian flag.
- The production manager [*any person who occupies that position*] assigns schedules.

(h) Occupational titles used descriptively are normally followed by a complete personal name. They should **not** be capitalized in writing for general readers, although corporate requirements and the expectations of a specialized readership often result in a more liberal use of capital letters:

- manager Cito Gaston
- production superintendent Anna Chang
- technical writer John Lipon

(i) Do **not** capitalize adjectives derived from titles unless they are part of a title:

- episcopal
- papal
- ministerial correspondence
- presidential prerogative
- Rabbinical College of Telshe

(j) Capitalize titles of respect and forms of address, even when used in the plural:

- Your Honour
- Your Grace
- Your Excellencies
- Mr. Chairman
- Their Royal Highnesses
- Her Worship

4.09 Personifications and abstractions

Capitalize vivid personifications and metonymic nouns:

- the march of Time
- Fate's fool
- the Chair (*the person in charge of a meeting or assembly*)
- the Crown (*the person or agency representing a king or queen*)

Abstractions are sometimes capitalized when used in an ideal sense. As general concepts, however, they are lower-cased:

- We know that Justice is blind.
- Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.
— John Keats

4.10 Family appellations

Capitalize family appellations only when the name of a person follows, when they are unmodified, or when they are used in direct address:

- Grandmother Smith
- Aunt Sarah
- I met Mother at the theatre.
- Tell me, Son, where you have been.

but

- John's grandmother
- This is my aunt, Sarah Vick.

4.11 Races, languages and peoples

Capitalize nouns and adjectives referring to race, tribe, nationality and language:

- Amerindian
- Anglophone
- Arabic
- Caucasian
- Cree
- Francophone
- French
- Indian
- Inuk (*plural*: Inuit)
- Métis

Do **not** capitalize the word *allophone*, which refers to a person whose first language is neither English nor French and which is used with specific reference to Quebec.

The form of some words may vary depending on the meaning:

- Highlander (inhabitant of the Scottish Highlands)
 - highlander (inhabitant of any highland area)
- Aborigine (one of the indigenous peoples of Australia)
 - aborigine (indigenous inhabitant of a region)
- Pygmy (member of a group of African peoples)
 - pygmy (small in stature; insignificant)

Capitalize the singular and plural forms of the nouns *Status Indian*, *Registered Indian*, *Non-Status Indian* and *Treaty Indian*, as well as the adjectives *Indigenous* and *Aboriginal*, when they refer to Indigenous people in Canada.

Note the differences in meaning of the following noun phrases:

- **Indigenous person** (one individual)

- Example: Any Indigenous person in Alberta is eligible under this program.
- **Indigenous persons, Indigenous people** (more than one person)
 - Example: The conference could not have succeeded without the help of almost a thousand Indigenous people from all over Saskatchewan.
- **Indigenous peoples** (two or more Indigenous groups)
 - Example: Representatives from three Indigenous peoples were present.

For further information on the representation of Indigenous peoples in written communications, see [Chapter 14 Elimination of Stereotyping in Written Communications](#).

4.12 School subjects, courses and degrees

In keeping with [4.11 Races, languages and peoples](#) above, capitalize the names of languages. Do **not** capitalize the names of other disciplines when used in a general sense. Capitalize them when used to refer to school subjects or the names of particular courses:

- This university requires French as a prerequisite.
- She is interested in history.
- He reads articles on economics and biology in his spare time.

but

- He passed with a "B" in History this term.
- She is taking Chemistry 101 and Economics 406.

Do **not** capitalize the name of a degree in informal references, but do capitalize it when it is written in full:

- Janet is earning her master's degree.
- Ellen Compton, Doctor of Philosophy
- He holds a Master of Arts degree from McGill University.

Do **not** capitalize terms designating academic years:

- She held two jobs during her senior year.

Capitalize *grade* when followed by a number or letter:

- My daughter has completed Grade 6.

4.13 Military terms

Capitalize the names and nicknames of military bases, forces and units of all sizes and of exercises:

- Canadian Forces Base Trenton
- Exercise Rapier Thrust
- Mobile Command
- the Blue Berets
- the Canadian Forces
- 450 Helicopter Squadron

Note

In Department of National Defence documents, the specific part of an exercise name is written entirely in upper case, e.g., *Exercise SILENT DEFENDER*.

Use the lower case for general and informal references:

- the Fifth Army

but

- the army

4.14 Modes of transportation

Capitalize the names of types of aircraft, the names of makes of cars and other modes of transportation, and the names of individual ships, locomotives, spacecraft, etc.:

- the Cessna-7
- a Boeing 747
- the Bricklin
- *Mariner IV*

Note

In Department of National Defence documents, the names of ships and submarines are written entirely in upper case, e.g., HMCS DONNACONA.

See [6.07 Modes of transportation](#) for further information about the italicization of names.

4.15 Medals, awards, honours and decorations

Capitalize the official names of professional, academic and military medals, awards, honours and decorations:

- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Order of Canada
- Nobel Peace Prize
- a Nobel Prize winner
- Governor General's Award
- Victoria Cross

Most common-noun short forms are lower-cased:

- No award was given this year.

However, they may be capitalized if the reference is clear:

- The Prize [*Nobel Peace Prize, mentioned in a previous sentence*] was her reward for a lifetime of effort.

4.16 Sporting events and trophies

Capitalize the official and familiar names of major sporting events and trophies:

- the Queen's Plate
- the XXVI Olympiad; the Olympic Games
- the Stanley Cup

Capitalize the short form in subsequent references:

- The second Series game will be played today.
- Her team won the Cup last year as well.

4.17 Time references and historical periods and events

Capitalize the names of months and days, of holidays and holy days, of historical and geological periods and events, and of parliamentary sessions:

- Wednesday
- October
- Thanksgiving Day
- Passover
- Christmas
- April Fools' Day
- The First Session of
- the Ice Age
- the Second World War
- World War II
- the Middle Ages
- the Gulf War
- the Pleistocene Epoch
- the Thirty-second Parliament

Do **not** capitalize the names of the seasons, centuries or decades unless they are personified or are part of special names:

- spring
- winter
- the twentieth century
- the fifties

but

- the Roaring Twenties (name of an era)
- the Winter Palace

Capitalize the names of events recorded in sacred writings and of historical events with a strong religious dimension:

- the Flood
- the Exodus
- the Immaculate Conception
- the Crucifixion
- the Crusades
- the Reformation
- the Great Schism
- the Hegira
- the Diet of Worms
- the Second Vatican Council

Terms that refer to events and periods are often capitalized when they refer to specific events or periods and lower-cased when used in a general sense:

- the Ice Age
- the First World War
- the Quiet Revolution
- the Crusades
- Stone Age hunting implements
- the most recent ice age

- the two world wars
- She started a revolution.
- a crusade against poverty
- He uses stone-age management techniques.

For the use of capitals with time zones, see [1.22 Time zones](#).

4.18 Cultural periods, movements and styles

Capitalize nouns and adjectives designating literary, philosophical, musical, religious and artistic periods, movements and styles when they are derived from proper nouns:

- Aristotelian logic
- Cartesian dualism
- the Bauhaus
- Gregorian chant
- Romanesque architecture
- Arianism
- Methodism
- Hasidism

Otherwise, such terms are lower-cased except when it is necessary to distinguish a style or movement from the same word used in its general sense:

- cubism
- existentialism
- humanism
- rococo
- the New Criticism
- the Group of Seven
- the Enlightenment
- Scholasticism

4.19 Terms related to religion

The same principles apply to religious terms as to general vocabulary. Writers should resist the temptation to overcapitalize.

(a) Capitalize most adjectives and verbs derived from the names of organized religions:

- Anglican
- Roman Catholic
- Shiite
- Greek Orthodox
- Christianize
- Free Methodist

but

- baptize
- baptism
- christen

(b) Capitalize the names and titles of holy and revered persons:

- The Blessed Virgin

- Our Lady of Sorrows
- Mother Superior
- Saint Jerome
- Maimonides
- Buddha

(c) Capitalize unique theological concepts:

- the Fall
- the Flood
- Original Sin
- the Second Coming
- the Nativity
- the Chosen People
- the Holy Grail
- the Holy of Holies

(d) Do **not** capitalize derived terms that are not used in a religious sense:

- She is very catholic in her literary tastes.
- His ideas are quite orthodox.

(e) Capitalize the titles of religious writings and documents, special prayers and devotional canticles, creeds and confessions:

- the Bible
- the Torah
- the Koran
- the Vulgate
- Deuteronomy
- the Apocrypha
- the Ten Commandments
- the Talmud

4.20 Deities

(a) Capitalize names, synonyms and personifications of deities and other supernatural beings:

- God
- the Creator
- the Almighty
- Mother Nature
- Jehovah
- Siva
- Minerva
- Moloch
- Allah
- Manitou

(b) Do **not** capitalize such words used as common nouns:

- The child was an angel.
- The adoring public regarded the film star as a god.

(c) Derivatives of these terms are normally lower-cased, as are similar terms used metaphorically:

- christen
- messianic
- a saviour

(d) Capitalize personal pronouns that refer to deities when they are used as proper nouns, but do **not** capitalize relative pronouns:

- Trust in Him whose strength will uphold you.

(e) Do **not** capitalize the words *god* and *goddess* when they refer to pagan deities, but capitalize the names of the deities themselves (*Baal, Woden, Zeus*).

(f) Do **not** capitalize words such as *heaven, paradise, purgatory, nirvana, happy hunting ground, devil* and *angel* when used in a non-religious sense:

- After his wife died he went through purgatory.
- War is hell.

but

- God is in Heaven.
- Many Buddhists seek to attain Nirvana.

4.21 Geographical terms

(a) Capitalize the names of countries, regions, counties, cities and other official and specified political, administrative and geographical divisions and topographical features:

- El Salvador
- the Northern Hemisphere
- the International Boundary
- the Prairies
- the Canadian Shield
- the Maritimes
- the Atlantic provinces
- the Ontario Region (sector of government department)
- the Crow's Nest Pass
- the Grassy Narrows Reserve
- the Pacific
- Lanark County
- Sherbrooke
- Pickle Lake
- Elm Street West
- the Okanagan Valley
- the South Saskatchewan River
- the Northwest Territories

(b) Capitalize a generic term when it is an accepted short form of the proper noun:

- the Continent
- the States

(c) Do **not** capitalize a generic term such as *city, county, state* or *province* when it precedes the proper noun or stands alone, unless it is used in a corporate sense:

- She lives in the city of Regina. (*place*)
- I have travelled all over the province of Ontario. (*place*)
- The states of Switzerland are called cantons.

but

- Buy Province of Ontario bonds. (*provincial government*)
- The City of Regina took him to court. (*municipal government*)
- The State of New York has revamped its social assistance programs. (*state government*)

(d) Do **not** capitalize a generic term used in the plural unless it is part of a geographical name:

- lakes Huron and Ontario
- the Thompson and Fraser rivers

but

- the Rocky Mountains
- the South Seas

(e) In general, do **not** capitalize the names of compass points or similar descriptive terms unless they have taken on political or other connotations or form the titles of administrative regions:

- northern New Brunswick
- the west of Saskatchewan

but

- the West
- Western values
- the Far North
- the Eastern Townships
- Northern Ireland

(f) Some terms are capitalized when they refer to specific regions and lower-cased when used descriptively:

- the East Coast **but** the east coast of Nova Scotia
- Arctic Ocean **but** arctic conditions

4.22 Buildings, monuments and public places

Capitalize the official names of specific buildings, monuments, squares, parks, etc.:

- Robson Square
- St. Andrew's Church
- the Brock Monument
- the National Gallery
- the O'Keefe Centre
- the Peace Bridge
- the Plains of Abraham
- the Temple of Cheops
- the Toronto Public Library
- the Vancouver International Airport

Do **not** capitalize words describing these features when they are used generically, in names that are not official, or in plural forms:

- the city's war memorial
- the international bridge
- an Anglican church
- an Egyptian temple
- Yonge and Bay streets
- the Vancouver airport

4.23 Astronomical terms

Capitalize the names of planets and other astronomical bodies and configurations. Capitalize *earth*, *sun* and *moon* only when they are mentioned in relation to other planets or heavenly bodies:

- Venus
- the Great Bear
- The sun shines brightly.
- Mercury is closer than the Earth to the Sun.

Do **not** capitalize generic words forming part of the name of a celestial object:

- Halley's comet
- the rings of Saturn

4.24 Biological terms

Capitalize the scientific name of a phylum, order, class, family or genus, but **not** common names or the epithets referring to a species or subspecies, even if they are derived from proper names:

- the phylum Arthropoda
- the order Rosales
- the genus *Sporotrichum*
- the species *Sporotrichum schenkii* (second word denotes species)
- The jaguar and the lion are members of the family Felidae.

See [6.11 Mathematical, statistical and scientific material](#) for rules governing the italicization of biological classifications.

Capitalize proper nouns modifying a common name, except where usage has established the lower case:

- Grayson lily
- Cupid's-delight
- Queen Anne's lace
- Judas tree
- Canada goose
- Dutch elm

but

- malpeque oyster
- timothy grass

4.25 Chemical, medical and pharmacological terms

In text, do **not** capitalize the names of chemical elements and compounds:

- krypton
- sodium bicarbonate

- hydrogen peroxide

The capitalization of chemical symbols should follow standard practice:

- H_2O
- NaHCO_3

Do **not** capitalize the names of conditions, syndromes and the like, but capitalize a personal name that forms part of such a term:

- diabetes insipidus
- Down syndrome
- Huntington's chorea

Capitalize the names of infectious organisms but **not** the names of conditions based upon such names:

- People attacked by *Salmonella* are likely to suffer from salmonellosis.

Do not capitalize the generic names of drugs:

- phenobarbital
- sulfasalazine

4.26 Scientific names with eponyms

In scientific terms composed of a common noun preceded by a proper noun, an adjective derived from a proper noun, or a proper noun with an apostrophe *s*, capitalize the adjective or proper noun but **not** the common noun. Do **not** capitalize the names of laws or theories or the names of minerals, particles or elements derived from personal names:

- Hodgkin's disease
- Becquerel rays
- Reiter's syndrome
- Gaussian curve
- Bohr radius
- Ohm's law

but

- the general theory of relativity
- the second law of thermodynamics
- forsterite
- boson
- germanium

Note that certain personal names begin with a small letter:

- van't Hoff equation
- van Willebrand disease

4.27 Copyrighted names

Capitalize trade names of drugs and any other manufactured products unless they have become established as common nouns:

- Plexiglas
- Tylenol
- Valium

- Prozac

but

- styrofoam
- nylon

To determine proper usage, check the *Canadian Trade Index* or your dictionary.

Some industries, especially in the high-technology field, use capital letters within the name of a product. The names of all such terms and products, including those of computer languages, should be capitalized according to the manufacturer's preference:

- WordPerfect
- VisiCalc
- Pascal
- COBOL
- BASIC

Wherever possible, do **not** use trade names as generic nouns or adjectives. For example, write *adhesive tape*, **not** *Scotch tape*. Some words, such as *frisbee* and *realtor*, are commonly used as generic terms, but they are in fact copyrighted. The word *Aspirin* is trademarked (and capitalized) in Canada, but not in the United States.

4.28 SI/metric units

Capitalize only the word *Celsius* when writing the names of SI/metric units in full. When using symbols, capitalize all those based on personal names and the letter *L* for *litre*:

- 30 m (metres)
- 475 g (grams)
- 12 V (volts)
- 30 L (litres)

Capitalize the symbols for the prefixes from *mega* to *exa*. The symbols for the others remain in lower case. Consistency is important here because the letters *m* and *p* are both used in symbols for two different prefixes:

- mg (milligram)
 - Mg (megagram)
- pm (picometre)
 - Pm (petametre)

See also [1.23 The International System of Units \(SI\)](#).

4.29 Publications and works of art

In English titles of books, articles, periodicals, newspapers, plays, operas and long musical compositions and recordings, poems, paintings, sculptures and motion pictures, capitalize all words except articles, conjunctions of fewer than four letters, and prepositions of fewer than four letters. These exceptions are also capitalized when they immediately follow a period, colon or dash within a title and when they are the first or last word in a title:

- book
 - *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*
- book
 - *Under the Volcano*

- book
 - *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- book
 - *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*
- painting
 - *Rain in the North Country*
- film
 - *Goin' Down the Road*
- opera
 - *The Magic Flute*

Words that are normally prepositions are capitalized when they help form another part of speech:

- *Getting By While Getting On*
- *Guide to On-Reserve Housing*

In short titles, capitalize words that would be capitalized in full titles:

- *Appleton's General Guide to the United States and Canada, Illustrated With Railway Maps, Plans of Cities, and Table of Railway and Steamboat Fares, for the Year 1891* (full title)
- *Appleton's Guide for 1891* (short form)
- I read about it in the *News*.

Even if some words appear in all capital letters on the title page, capitalize only initial letters, except in specialized bibliographies that must reflect the original typography.

Titles of ancient manuscripts are capitalized, even if the titles were assigned in modern times:

- the Dead Sea Scrolls
- Codex Alexandrinus

See the Appendix for capitalization of titles in French.

In titles containing hyphenated compounds, always capitalize the first element. Capitalize the second element if it is a proper noun or proper adjective or if it is as important as the first element:

- *A History of Eighteenth-Century Literature*
- *Anti-Americanism in Latin America*

4.30 Parts of a book or document

(a) Capitalize references to specific parts of a document. These include certain common nouns in the singular when they are used in text references with numbers or letters indicating place, position or major division in a sequence. Capitalize a letter following such a term:

- Act II
- Appendix B
- Chapter 3
- Chart 2
- Corollary 1
- Exhibit A
- Figure 7
- Plate 4

- Scene *iii*
- Table 3
- Theorem 3
- Volume 13

(b) Do **not** capitalize minor subdivisions such as *page*, *note*, *line*, *paragraph* and *verse*:

- See page 6, line 48.

(c) Do **not** capitalize *section* when used for part of a law or set of regulations, but capitalize it if it refers to a large subdivision of a report, book or other document:

- under section 23 of the Act
- Volume 10, Section 5

(d) Do **not** capitalize words referring to parts of a book when they are used in a general sense, are preceded by modifiers, or are in plural forms:

- The theory will be discussed in the next chapter.
- The appendixes outline other migration patterns.
- Even Miller's extensive bibliography is not complete.

(e) Capitalize cross-references within a book when they refer to a particular section:

- Further readings are listed in the Bibliography.
- See the Appendix for urban statistics.

(f) Informal references to chapter and topic titles may be capitalized and written without italics or quotation marks:

His topics included Northern Travel, Survival on the Road, and Basic Maintenance.

See also [1.12 Parts of a book or document](#).

4.31 Headings

In headings that begin at the margin, capitalize only the first word and any other words that require capitals in their own right. In centred headings, capitalize all words except for articles (unless they begin the heading) and any conjunctions or prepositions of fewer than four letters. Prepositions that are an inseparable part of the verb should also be capitalized.

For further information, see [11.16 Headings](#).

4.32 Terms indicating time or numbered sequence

Capitalize common singular nouns and abbreviations followed by a date, number or letter to denote time or sequence, or for the purpose of reference:

- It's Day 15 of the election campaign.
- The shortest route from Toronto to Montréal is along Highway 401.

Some idiomatic expressions containing common nouns followed by a letter or number are also capitalized. The numbers in such expressions are often spelled out:

- Back to Square One.
- He's on Cloud Nine.

4.33 Lists

Point-form lists make it easier for the reader to understand how the elements are related. Grammar and syntax determine the internal capitalization and punctuation of the initial letters of items in lists. It is more important for lists to be logically understandable and syntactically consistent than to look alike.

If the lead-in to a list is syntactically related to the points that follow, as in this list,

- do **not** capitalize the first words of items within the list, and
- except for the bullets or dashes, punctuate as if the entire sentence was not in point form.

Items in lists are sometimes capitalized. This list illustrates one possible set of conditions:

- It is made up of complete sentences, which do not depend on the lead-in sentence fragment and which end with a period.
- It contains points that are more easily grasped separately than together.

Incomplete sentences or single words entered as points in lists are normally lower-cased:

Four issues are related to the economics of healthy housing:

- affordability
- adaptability
- viability for the construction industry
- marketability

Note that there is no period at the end of the list.

See also [7.70 Capitalization](#).

4.34 Legal usage

(a) Some common nouns referring to parties to an action, the names of documents or judicial bodies are capitalized:

- Counsel for the Plaintiff
- The Court (*meaning* the judge) sustained the objection.
- the said Notary
- the aforementioned Agreement

but

- The court was in session.

(b) Capitalize the official names of treaties, agreements, legal codes, pieces of legislation and other official documents, as well as their official short forms:

- the Treaty of Versailles
- the Financial Administration Act
- the White Paper on Taxation
- Order-in-Council P.C. 1354

(c) Short forms are normally capitalized only when they constitute proper nouns or refer to a document of great significance:

- An appeal was launched under the Charter (*full name*: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms).

Do **not** capitalize short forms when they are used in a general sense, as adjectives or plurals, or with modifiers:

- Farmers objected to some of the treaty provisions.
- Parliament discussed the new white papers before it adjourned.
- Under this act, a subsidy was offered to transportation companies.

(d) Do **not** capitalize general references to pending and defeated legislation:

- Parliament is discussing a new privacy act.

4.35 The salutation and complimentary close

Use capitals for the first word and all nouns in the salutation of a letter, but only for the first word in a close:

- My dear Sir
- Dear Madam
- Yours truly
- Very sincerely yours

4.36 Compounds

A proper noun or adjective in a hyphenated compound retains the capital:

- Greco-Roman
- trans-Canada
- neo-Nazi
- Pan-American

In general, do **not** capitalize prefixes or suffixes added to proper nouns:

The President-elect will tour the mid-Atlantic States in an American-made car.

Do **not** capitalize the second element of a compound if it simply modifies the first or if the hyphenated elements make up a single word:

- Sonata in E-flat Major
- Re-education for development
- Forty-second Street

4.37 The definite article

Capitalize *the* when it is part of a corporate name:

- *The Globe and Mail*
- The Pas
- The Canadian Red Cross Society

Do **not** capitalize *the* when it is used adjectivally:

The Minister answered the *Globe and Mail* reporter.

The French definite article should be retained if it is part of a corporate name, and *the* should not precede it. If the French article is not part of the official title, replace it with *the*:

- an article in *Le Devoir*

but

- a representative of the Office des professions du Québec

4.38 Single letters used as words

Capitalize a single letter used as a word, whether hyphenated or not:

- C Minor
- H-bomb
- T-shirt
- U-turn
- vitamin A
- X-ray

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