First Words; Letter Salutations and Closings; The Pronoun I

First Words

13a. Capitalize the first word in every sentence.

EXAMPLE The rain began at three o’clock. [The is capitalized because it is the first word of the sentence.]

Capitalize the first word of a directly quoted sentence. When a writer repeats someone else’s exact words, the writer is quoting that person. Anytime you quote a sentence, begin the quoted sentence with a capital letter, even when the quoted sentence begins in the middle of a longer sentence.

EXAMPLE Marisa said, “My grandmother lives in Montana.” [My is capitalized because it is the first word of the quoted sentence.]

EXERCISE A In each of the following sentences, circle the letter that should be capitalized.

Examples
1. What time is it? [What is capitalized because it is the first word of the sentence.]
2. Sara said, “That tree is beautiful.” [That is capitalized because it is the first word of a quoted sentence.]
3. Jack asked, “Do you want to go swimming tomorrow?” [Which word is the first word of the quoted sentence?]
4. The planet Mercury is closest to the sun. [Which word is the first word of the sentence?] 
5. My brother and I visit my grandparents’ farm every summer.
6. “Bring your swimsuit and a towel,” said Rita.
7. How handsome you look in the tuxedo!
8. “Apples are my favorite fruit,” said Michael.
10. The movie starts at eight o’clock.
11. Maria smiled and said, “You can borrow my book.”
12. My favorite poet is Robert Frost.
Letter Salutations and Closings

Capitalize the first word in both the salutation and the closing of a letter.

The **salutation** is the short line at the top of the letter in which you greet the person you are writing.

The **closing** is the short line at the bottom of the letter that signals the end of the letter.

**SALUTATIONS**

- Dear Mr. Jackson:
- My dear Sarah,

**CLOSINGS**

- Sincerely,
- Very truly yours,

**NOTE**

Except for names and titles, the first word is the only word that is capitalized in a salutation or closing.

**EXERCISE B**

In the following letter salutations and closings, circle the letter that should be capitalized.

**Example 1.** Sincerely yours, [Sincerely is capitalized because it is the first word of the closing.]

11. dear Mrs. Maxwell: [Which word is the first word of this salutation?]
12. yours truly,
13. dear Mr. President:
14. with warmest regards to your family,
15. dearest Sally and James,

The Pronoun I

Capitalize the pronoun I.

In the English language, the pronoun I is the only pronoun that is always capitalized, even if it is not the first word of a sentence. Also capitalize I whenever you use it in a contraction, such as I’ve or I’d.

**EXAMPLES**

Does Kim know that I found her jacket?
I’d like to see that movie.

**EXERCISE C**

In each sentence below, circle the letter that should be capitalized.

**Example 1.** I’m enjoying the play. [The pronoun I is always capitalized, even in a contraction.]

16. I’d like to read that book. [What word is always capitalized?]
17. Do you remember when i hit the home run?
18. Mark and i will blow up the balloons.
19. Don’t forget that i’ve got homework to do.
20. Tina said, “i remembered to bring an extra pencil.”
Proper Nouns and Common Nouns

**13e.** Capitalize proper nouns.

A *proper noun* names a particular person, place, or thing. Proper nouns are capitalized. A *common noun* names a kind of person, place, or thing. A common noun is not capitalized, unless it begins a sentence or is part of a title.

**PROPER NOUNS**
- Herman Melville
- Arizona
- Tuesday

**COMMON NOUNS**
- author
- state
- day

**PROPER NOUNS**

- My aunt Lucy owns a nursery. *[Lucy names a specific person and is capitalized.]*

- My brother graduated from Westlake High School. *[Westlake High School names a specific school and is capitalized.]*

- Will you send me a postcard of the Eiffel Tower when you go to Paris? *[Eiffel Tower names a specific structure and is capitalized.]*

**NOTE** Some proper nouns consist of more than one word. Capitalize all the important words.

**EXAMPLES**
- Ivan the Terrible *-[The word the is not important and is not capitalized.]*
- Isle of Wight *-[The word of is not important and is not capitalized.]*

**EXERCISE A** Circle the correctly capitalized word group in each pair below.

**Examples**

1. Audrey Hepburn
   - Winston churchill
   *-[Both first and last names should be capitalized, so Audrey Hepburn is the correctly capitalized word group in this pair.]*

2. last Month
   - in December
   *-[The word month is a common noun and should not be capitalized. The word December is the name of a particular month and should be capitalized, so in December is the correctly capitalized word group in this pair.]*

3. one day in may
   - May 10, 2002
   *-[Which word group correctly capitalizes the name of a month?]*

4. my older brother John
   - my younger Brother fred
   *-[Which word group correctly capitalizes the name of a person?]*

5. a Poet
   - Emily Dickinson

6. one of the States
   - New Mexico

7. Saturday
   - a day of the Weekend

8. the striped Cat
   - my cat Groucho

9. a country in Europe
   - germany
8. Mr. Matthews one of my Teachers
10. a country in north America the United States of America

**TIP** To tell whether a noun is common or proper, try placing *a, an, or the* in front of the noun. If you cannot, then the noun is probably a proper noun. It makes sense to say *a country*, so *country* is a common noun. It does not make sense to say *a Kenya*, so *Kenya* is a proper noun that should be capitalized.

Capitalize the names of persons and animals. Also capitalize initials in names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONS</th>
<th>Kenny North</th>
<th>M. L. Morris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANIMALS</td>
<td>Buck</td>
<td>Lady</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| PROPER NOUNS| Franklin D. Roosevelt was president of the United States.  
             |             | [Franklin D.  |
| IN SENTENCES| Roosevelt names a specific person. All parts of a name, including the  
             |             | middle initial, are capitalized.] |
|             | My dog Rusty likes to swim. [Rusty names a specific dog and is capitalized.] |

**EXERCISE B** Circle all the letters that should be capitalized in the following items.

**Examples** 1. my brother’s cat frisky  
               [Frisky is capitalized because it is the name of a specific animal.]
               2. William Henry Harrison  
               [William Henry Harrison is the name of a specific person and is capitalized.]

11. john f. kennedy  [What letters of the name should be capitalized?]
12. my sister-in-law kate  [What letter of the name should be capitalized?]
13. his brother’s dog, misty
14. florence nightingale
15. d. d. daniels
16. my best friend’s parrot, coco
17. henri matisse
18. amy tan
19. edward r. reynolds
20. nina’s new kitten, smokey
Proper Nouns A

Geographical Names

13e. Capitalize proper nouns.

Geographical names are proper nouns and should be capitalized. Geographical names include places such as towns, cities, counties, states, countries, islands, bodies of water, forests, parks, streets, and highways.

**EXAMPLES**
- Asia [continent]
- Idaho [state]
- Lake Superior [body of water]
- Mount Everest [mountain]
- Italy [country]
- Sacramento [city]
- Avenue of the Americas [street]
- Yellowstone National Park [park]

**NOTE**
When words like north, south, western, or northeastern are used in the name of a region, they are capitalized. When you use these words to show a direction, do not capitalize them.

**EXAMPLES**
- My family has always lived in the Southwest. [region]
- The sun appears to rise in the east and set in the west. [directions]

**EXERCISE A**
In each sentence below, circle any letter that should be capitalized.

**Examples**
1. Is @laska the largest state in the @nited States? [Alaska and United States are capitalized because they are the names of specific places.]
2. The directions say that we should go west when we reach @ashington Street. [The word west is not capitalized because it is a direction, not an area or region. Washington Street is capitalized because it is a specific place.]

1. Jesse wants to travel to australia. [Which word names a specific place?]
2. Those fish live in the amazon river. [Which words name a specific place?]
3. My great-grandparents came from japan.
4. We went hiking in redwood national park.
5. Is that store located on broad street?
6. Denver is the capital city of colorado.
7. The blue ridge mountains are really beautiful.
8. How deep is the grand canyon?
9. I know that rhode island is the smallest state.
10. Have you ever traveled in the northwest?
Teams, Organizations, Institutions, and Government Bodies

The names of teams, organizations, institutions, and government bodies are proper nouns and should be capitalized.

**EXAMPLES**
- Future Farmers of America  [organization]
- Presidio High School Panthers  [team]
- Central Valley Children’s Hospital  [institution]
- Supreme Court  [government body]

**NOTE** Abbreviations of the names of organizations, institutions, and government bodies are often a set of capital letters.

**EXAMPLES**
- Federal Bureau of Investigation  FBI
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization  NATO

**EXERCISE B** In each sentence below, circle any letter that should be capitalized.

**Examples**
1. Did you get a letter from the national honor society?  [National Honor Society is capitalized because it is the name of a specific organization.]
   - [H](o) n [o] r [s] e [s] i [o] n
2. When was the environmental protection agency (EPA) established?  [Environmental Protection Agency is the name of specific government agency and is capitalized.]
   - En[v]iron[men]tal
   - Prot[ection]  A[gen]cy

11. My brother will attend Idaho State University next year.  [Which words name a specific institution?]
12. Every state elects two members to the United States Senate.  [Which word names a specific government body?]
13. Is your dentist a member of the American Dental Association?
14. We visited my grandfather at Columbia Hospital.
15. She was invited to talk to the Arizona Historical Society.
16. The school’s soccer team is called the Blue Eagles.
17. Isn’t your sister joining the Air Force?
18. How many countries are members of the United Nations?
19. The bank is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC).
20. The playoff game between the Bobcats and the Pirates is tonight.
Proper Nouns B
Important Events, Historical Periods, and Calendar Items

13e. Capitalize proper nouns.

Be sure to capitalize the names of important events and periods in history. The names of other kinds of special events are also capitalized.

**EXAMPLES**
- Persian Gulf War [historical event]
- the Enlightenment [historical period]
- Sonoma County Fair [special event]

Always capitalize days of the week, months, and holidays. Seasons of the year are not usually capitalized.

**EXAMPLES**
- Monday, Saturday [days of the week]
- January, March [months]
- Presidents’ Day [holiday]
- summer, autumn, winter, spring [seasons of the year]

**EXERCISE A** Circle the correctly capitalized word group in each pair below.

**Example 1.** renaissance 
Bronze Age

[Both choices name specific periods. *Renaissance* is incorrectly capitalized. *Bronze Age* is correctly capitalized.]

1. World War II 
a War in the Middle East

[Which of these choices names a specific event?]

2. tennis Game 
Olympic Games

3. Reconstruction 
great depression

4. pecan Festival 
Texas State Fair

5. valentine’s day 
Labor Day

**Nationalities, Races, and Peoples**

Words that name nationalities, races, or peoples begin with a capital letter.

**EXAMPLES**
- Peruvian [nationality]
- Asian [race]
- Seminole [people]
EXERCISE B In the following sentences, circle any letter that should be capitalized.

Example 1. He is a well-known Russian. [Russian refers to a person of a particular nationality and is capitalized.]

6. My cousin’s wife is costa rican. [Which words refer to a specific nationality?]

7. Last year we studied the history of the hopi.

8. The final game was between the swedes and the norwegians.


10. Did you read this article about the bosnians?

**Businesses, Business Products, Ships, Trains, Aircraft, and Spacecraft**

The names of businesses and brand names are capitalized. Do not capitalize the name of a type of product.

**EXAMPLES**  
- Avery Dennison [business name]
- Hi-Liter [product brand name]
- highlighting marker [product type]

The names of ships, trains, aircraft, and spacecraft are proper nouns and are capitalized.

**EXAMPLES**  
- USS Lexington [ship]
- Empire Builder [train]
- Flyer [aircraft]
- Atlantis [spacecraft]

**EXERCISE C** Circle the correctly capitalized word group in each pair below.

Example 1. Kenmore refrigerator Gateway Computer  
[Both choices name a business and a product type. The business name should be capitalized, but the product name should not be capitalized. *Kenmore refrigerator* is correctly capitalized. *Gateway Computer* is incorrectly capitalized.]

11. the challenger USS Omaha
12. Kleenex a box of Tissues
13. Chevrolet truck Ford Car
14. Freight train *Tom Thumb*, a steam locomotive
15. Monopoly a board Game
Proper Nouns C
Buildings, Monuments, Memorials, and Awards

13e. Capitalize proper nouns.

The names of buildings and other structures are proper nouns and are capitalized. Do not capitalize the name of a type of building unless the word is part of the building’s name.

**EXAMPLES**  
- Brooklyn Bridge [name of a particular structure]  
- a suspension bridge [type of structure]

The names of monuments and memorials are capitalized. The names of special awards and prizes are also capitalized.

**EXAMPLES**  
- Jefferson Memorial [monument]  
- Caldecott Medal [special award or prize]

**Exercise A** In the following sentences, circle any letter that should be capitalized.

**Example**  1. Have you been to the *Washington Monument*? [The words *Washington Monument* name a specific structure and are capitalized.]

1. Could you give me directions to the national air and space museum? [Which words name a particular building?]

2. My father works at Tyler Memorial Hospital.

3. That movie won several Academy awards.

4. The presidential medal of freedom is our nation’s highest civilian award.

5. The Golden Gate Bridge is beautiful at sunset.

Religions, Holy Days, Sacred Writings, and Deities

The names of religions and their followers are capitalized. Also capitalize the names of holy days and celebrations, sacred writings, and specific deities.

**EXAMPLES**  
- Hinduism, Islam, Judaism [religions]  
- Unitarian, Taoist, Christian [followers of religions]  
- Purim, Palm Sunday, Ramadan [holy days or celebrations]  
- the Torah, Veda, the Bible [sacred writings]  
- Vishnu, Allah [specific deities]
**Exercise B** In the following sentences, circle any letter that should be capitalized.

**Example 1.** The Koran is the holy book of Islam. [The word Koran is capitalized because it is the name of a sacred book. The word Islam is capitalized because it names a religion.]

6. Many Episcopalians use the book of common prayer in their services. [Which word names a religious group? Which words name a book used by the group?]

7. The period called Lent begins on Ash Wednesday.

8. In Islam, Ramadan is a month-long period of fasting.

9. The ancient Native religion of Japan is Shinto.

10. In ancient Greece, Hera and Athena were important goddesses.

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**Planets, Stars, Constellations, and Other Heavenly Bodies**

The names of planets, stars, constellations, and other heavenly bodies are capitalized. The words Sun and moon are not usually capitalized.

**Examples**
- Jupiter, Neptune [planets]
- Sirius, Vega, Spica [stars]
- Draco, Orion [constellations]
- Halley’s Comet, Crab Nebula [other heavenly bodies]

**Note** The word Earth is not usually capitalized, unless it is used along with other names from astronomy that are capitalized.

**Examples**
- Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars are the first four planets. [The word Earth is capitalized because it is in a list that includes the names of other planets.]
- At midnight in our time zone, the sun is shining on the other side of the earth. [The word Earth is not capitalized.]

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**Exercise C** In each of the following sentences, circle any letter that should be capitalized.

**Example 1.** Which planet is smaller, Mercury or Pluto? [Mercury and Pluto are capitalized because they are the names of planets.]

11. The largest of Saturn’s moons is Titan. [Which word names a planet? Which word names another heavenly body?]

12. Another name for Polaris is North Star.

13. The largest of all the planets in our solar system is Jupiter.

14. The Big Dipper is a well-known constellation.

15. The Andromeda Galaxy is a spiral galaxy near our solar system.
School Subjects and Proper Adjectives

School Subjects

Do not capitalize the names of school subjects, except course names followed by numerals and languages.

EXAMPLES

I want to take journalism and art as my electives next year. [The school subjects journalism and art are not capitalized. They are not languages, and they are not followed by a numeral.]

The high school offers foreign language classes in Spanish, Latin, French, and German. [The school subjects Spanish, Latin, French, and German are capitalized because they are languages.]

My sister is taking Orchestra 101 at college this semester. [The course name Orchestra 101 is capitalized because it is followed by a numeral.]

EXERCISE A

In the following sentences, circle any letter that should be capitalized. Draw a slash (/) through any letter that is capitalized but should not be.

Examples

1. Are you taking French or German this year? [The school subjects French and German are languages, so they are capitalized.]

2. I have History class at nine o’clock. [The word history should not be capitalized.]

1. In choir III, we are singing complicated rounds. [Which word names a course? Is the course name followed by a numeral?]

2. Are you going to Spanish or Geometry? [Which words name courses? What kinds of courses are they?]

3. I would like to take Latin, but it is not available until high school.

4. What are you reading for Social Studies?

5. My brother has registered for chemistry and Biology.

6. Did he already take general science 101?

7. In our Journalism class, we are taking photographs for the yearbook.

8. The tryouts for concert band II are tomorrow.

9. What time does your Algebra class begin?

10. My electives this semester are Art and music.
Proper Adjectives

**13f.** Capitalize proper adjectives.

A proper adjective is an adjective formed from a proper noun. If the noun is always capitalized, the adjective formed from the noun should also be capitalized.

**PROPER NOUNS**  
Egypt, Euclid, England

**PROPER ADJECTIVES**  
Egyptian mummy, Euclidean geometry, English language

**NOTE** Be careful when you form adjectives from proper nouns. The spelling and the word endings are not always obvious. Refer to a dictionary if you’re unsure about the adjective form of a proper noun.

**EXERCISE B** In the following exercise, if the proper noun is given, write the proper adjective on the line provided. If the proper adjective is given, write the proper noun on the line provided.

**Examples**

1. Italy
   
   [The proper adjective formed from Italy is Italian.]

2. Rome
   
   [Roman is the proper adjective formed from the proper noun Rome.]

**Proper Nouns**

11. America [How is the proper adjective of America formed?]

12. [What proper noun is the proper adjective African formed from?]

13. Texas

14. 

15. Mexico

16. 

17. Asia

18. 

19. France

20. 

**Proper Adjectives**

11. 

12. African

13. 

14. Spanish

15. 

16. Japanese

17. 

18. Floridian

19. 

20. Israeli
Titles of Persons and Creative Works

Titles of Persons

13h. Capitalize titles.

Always capitalize the title of a person when the title comes before the person’s name. Even if the title is abbreviated, capitalize it.

**EXAMPLES**
- Prof. Gerald Green [The title Prof., which is the abbreviation for Professor, comes before the person’s name and should be capitalized.]
- He is a professor in the English Department. [The word professor is not capitalized because it is used alone.]
- Wasn’t President Dwight D. Eisenhower also a general? [The title President comes before the person’s name and should be capitalized. The title general is not capitalized because it is used alone.]

Capitalize a word that shows a family relationship when the word comes before the person’s name or is used instead of the person’s name. However, do not capitalize words showing family relationships when a possessive comes before the word.

**EXAMPLES**
- Here is a letter from Uncle John. [Uncle comes before the person’s name and should be capitalized.]
- Is your uncle John in the Navy? [Even though uncle comes before a person’s name, it is not capitalized because the possessive word your comes before it.]
- Ask Grandpa to cut the cake, please. [Grandpa is used instead of the name of the person and should be capitalized.]

**EXERCISE A**

In the following sentences, circle each letter that should be capitalized. Draw a slash (/) through each letter that is capitalized but should be lowercase.

**Examples**
1. Is Dr. Maldonado your Doctor, too? [Dr. is capitalized because it is an abbreviation of a title that comes before the person’s name. The word doctor should not be capitalized because it is used alone.]
2. Tell Aunt Sally to turn on the oven, please. [Aunt is capitalized because it comes before the person’s name and no possessive word comes before it.]

1. Sam will introduce the speaker, major Tom Jefferson. [Which word is a person’s title? Does the title come before the person’s name?]
2. Does your Grandmother live with your family? [Does the word that shows a family relationship come before a person’s name? Does it follow a possessive word?]
3. My Cousin Nate works for the city water department.
4. Has Mr. Reynolds published his book yet?
5. Our special guest is Phil Price, an assistant to the Mayor.
6. My Dentist has an office in that building.
7. Uncle Ralph and aunt Sarah are coming for Thanksgiving.
8. Did mom ride the bus to work today?
9. That is dr. Samuels, the President of our college.
10. Be sure to thank granddad for the birthday present.

**Titles of Creative Works**

Capitalize the first word, last word, and all other important words when you write the title of a book, a poem, or any other creative work. Capitalize these words in subtitles, too. Don’t capitalize an article (*a, an, or the*) or a short preposition (such as *of, in, or with*) unless the article or preposition is the first or last word in the title or subtitle.

**EXAMPLES**
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* [book]
- *Hamlet* [play]
- *Christina’s World* [painting]
- “America the Beautiful” [song]
- “A Time to Talk” [poem]
- *High Noon* [movie]
- *Star Trek* [television series]
- *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* [newspaper]
- *Ziggy* [comic strip]
- *Declaration of Independence* [historical document]

**EXERCISE B** For each of the titles in the following items, circle any letter that should be capitalized.

Examples 1. *Native Son*, a book by Richard Wright  [*Native Son* is the title of a book.]

2. “In a station of the metro,” a very short poem by Ezra Pound  [*In* is usually an unimportant word, but it is capitalized because it is the first word of the title. The words *a, of, and the* are not capitalized.]

11. *The Old Man and the Sea*, by Ernest Hemingway  [Which words in the title are unimportant? Is the first word of the title a word that is usually not important?]

12. Robert Penn Warren, who wrote *All the King’s Men*

13. Walt Whitman’s poem “a noiseless patient spider”

14. *Vertigo*, a film directed by Alfred Hitchcock

15. all the verses of “the star-spangled banner”

16. a character in the comic strip *Hagar the Horrible*

17. old episodes of *Star Trek* on television

18. one of Shakespeare’s plays, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

19. *The Three Musicians*, a painting by Picasso

20. business news in the *Wall Street Journal*