

Capitalization of Nouns

Sometimes, it can be difficult to determine which nouns require capitalization and which do not. This depends on if the noun is a **common** or **proper** noun.

Proper nouns designate a specific place, person, or thing.

- ex: New Haven, Barack Obama, Yale University

Common nouns designate a general place, person, or thing.

- ex: a city, a president, a university

What should be capitalized:	
Days of the week- ex: Monday	Races- ex: African American
Months of the year- ex: March	Streets- ex: Frontage Road
Brands- ex: Apple	Religions- ex: Catholicism
Holidays- ex: Christmas	Acronyms- ex: NATO
Planets- ex: Jupiter	"Initialisms"- ex: FBI
Places- ex: Pennsylvania	People's Names- ex: Hillary Clinton

Additional Rules:

- **Titles:** capitalize titles when used before names.
 - ex: Senator Clinton will be giving a speech.
A senator for New York will be speaking.
 - *remember- titles are not the same as occupations
- **Geographical Regions:** capitalize specific geographical regions.
 - ex: The East Coast gets a lot of snow during the winter.
The east coast of New Jersey has great weather.
- **Course Titles:** capitalize specific course titles.
 - ex: She will be taking Cell Biology 611 and economics.
- **Nicknames:** always capitalize nicknames.
 - ex: Tell Junior it is time for dinner.
- Do not capitalize county or city if it appears before a proper noun.
 - ex: The county of New Haven
New Haven County
- Do not capitalize a common noun if it appears after a semicolon or is part of a list of items.
 - ex: 1) a dog 2) a cat 3) a bird

Practice Exercises

Which sentences are correct?

1. a. The University in ohio is an excellent school.
b. The university in Ohio is an excellent school.

2. a. My grandfather lives on Prospect Street.
b. My Grandfather lives on prospect Street.

3. a. I have to take Physics and Molecular Biology 366.
b. I have to take physics and Molecular Biology 366.

4. a. We have to pick up some pepsi for tuesday's meeting.
b. We have to pick up some Pepsi for Tuesday's meeting.

Sources and Further Reading/Practice:

“The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation,” (Straus et. al. 2014)