

Johnson County Community College

## CAPITALIZATION

1. Capitalize the first word of every new grammatical unit (sentence or intended fragment punctuated as a sentence).

The Writing Center is a service for all students.

What is your desire? Nothing.

2. Capitalize the first word of every line in conventional poetry. (e.e. cummings is a good example of unconventionality concerning capitalization.)

3. Capitalize the first word of a quotation if it is a complete sentence. If it is not a sentence, do not capitalize the first word unless for another reason.

The girl's mother cried, "He didn't want her to go."

John's father yelled, "stop!" before John fell.

If the quotation of a sentence is broken in two, the second part is not capitalized.

"He will," John said, "do as he pleases."

4. Always capitalize the pronoun I (not the letter *i*) but do not capitalize other pronouns unless they begin a sentence.

I am what I am.

Note: *O*, not *oh*, is always capitalized. *O* is used most frequently in literature and prayer.

O Lord, My God!

5. Capitalize proper nouns and adjectives. A proper noun is the name of a particular person, place, or thing.

John and Judy – people  
Cincinnati – city  
The Blue Goose – airplane

A proper adjective is derived from a proper noun.

French bread

**NOTE:** Always capitalize a family name according to the family's preference.

6. Capitalize geographical names, streets, buildings, parks and companies; regional names and nicknames; compass directions because they are proper nouns.

Missouri River  
Lake Quivira  
Rocky Mountains

Iowa is sometimes called the “Hawkeye State.”  
JCCC is on College Boulevard.  
I love picnics at Antioch Park.  
The Western Electric Company has a branch office near I-35.  
The South shall rise again.  
**but**  
To get to Riverside you must go north of the river.

Do not capitalize geographical words when they do not refer to a specific place.

hills, countries, mountains

7. Capitalize the proper names of all organizations, religions, races, and nationalities.

Data Processing Club	Jew
Fundamentalist	American

8. Capitalize all nouns referring to God, sacred writings, and religious observances.

God	Koran
Holy Bible	Ten Commandments

9. Capitalize national and religious holidays.

Christmas	Valentine’s Day
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10. Capitalize events, eras, prizes, and documents—wars, battles, historic events, treaties, documents, prizes, and important periods.

World War I	Prohibition Era
Civil War	Nobel Peace Prize
Korean Conflict	

11. Capitalize civil and military titles when they precede a name. Capitalize academic degrees and their abbreviations.

Lieutenant Jones **but** lieutenants  
Dr. Jones or J. Jones, Ph.D.

**12.** Capitalize the first word of all important words in titles of books, plays, stories, articles, poems, musical works, journals, magazines, newspapers, television shows, and movies.

The Thornbirds  
Readers Digest

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty  
Kansas City Star

**13.** Capitalize family relationship names only when they are being used as proper names.

I told you, Mom, I don't want to go.

John went with his father and mine.

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, and aunts must attend the reunion.