

The Writing Lab

Capitalization

Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick

Here is the general rule to remember: Only capitalize words if they refer to proper nouns (**specific** people, places, classes, degrees, and job titles). Don't capitalize words if they refer to common nouns (**general classes** of people, places, classes, degrees, and job titles). Here are some terms you are likely to encounter in academic and professional settings.

Category	Capitalize	Don't Capitalize
Names of Courses	Specific courses: Math 096, Psychology 101, Music 107, Art 121, English 102, and Sociology 102	General academic disciplines: math, psychology, music, art, sociology, biology <i>Note: An exception to this rule is that any name of a language (such as German, Japanese, French, English) should always be capitalized.</i>
Names of Geographic Regions	Specific places or geographic regions: Chicago, Iowa, Alaska, the Midwest, the Pacific Northwest, the Southwest	General directions as opposed to specific geographic regions: north, south, east, west, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest
Names of Schools, Hospitals, and Businesses	Specific schools, hospitals, and businesses: Holy Ghost Elementary School, Wahlert High School, Parkland College, the University of Illinois, Humanities Department, Carle Hospital, First Federal Savings and Loan, Best Buy	General terms for schools, hospitals, and businesses: grade school, elementary school, high school, college, university, school, hospital, clinic, bank, store
Names of Academic Degrees	Specific academic degrees if the entire degree name is written out and the major is included: Bachelor of Arts in English, Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Master of Arts in Mathematics, Associate of Arts in Biology. <i>Note: Do not use apostrophes when using specific degree names.</i>	General names of degrees that are not written out: Use an apostrophe with bachelor's degree and master's degree but not with a doctoral degree or associates degree.
Names of Professions or Professional Titles	Specific professional titles if they come <u>before</u> the person's name: Professor Angela Gulick, Dr. Gretchen Sperka, Judge Michael Shubatt, Parkland College President Thomas Ramage, Library Director Jennie Stoltz	General names of professions if they come <u>after</u> the person's name: Angela Gulick, professor; Gretchen Sperka, doctor; Michael Shubatt, judge; Thomas Ramage, president; Jennie Stoltz, library director