



Punctuation: capital letters

Capital letters were traditionally used to show 'respect' for particular words, and as a result, they have an important place in written English.

1. To begin the first word of a sentence

Example:

The increasing use of the internet has led to enormous changes in the way businesses now communicate. **M**oreover, the implications of these changes are only just being recognized.

2. With names and titles

Examples:

- Specific titles when used together with a person's name, i.e., **Mr Michael Douglas**; **Miss Jessica Swann**; **Mrs Zainab Mkachu**; **Ms Denise Bradley**; **Sir Donald Bradman**; **Dr Bill Macdonald**; **Her Excellency, Marjorie Nelson-Jackson, the Governor of South Australia**; **President John F. Kennedy**.
- The names of countries, states, towns, streets, suburbs, rivers, mountains and so on, i.e., **Malaysia**; **South Australia**; **Hong Kong**; **Woodleigh Street**; **Aberfoyle Park**; the **River Murray**; **Mount Lofty**; the planet **Jupiter**.
- The special names for the days and months of a year, i.e. The baby was born on **Wednesday**, 27th **June**, 2001.
- The special names of festivals and historic periods, i.e., **Christmas**; **Easter**; **Ramadam**, **Yom Kippur**; the **Cold War**.
- The first letter of significant words in the title of a film, book, play poem, art work, monument, etc, i.e. '**Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon**'; '**English Essentials**' by M. Fox and L. Wilkinson; Dorothy Lange's photograph of the '**Migrant Mother**'; the **Pyramids of Giza**.
- When writing the names of organisations, firms, religious groups, languages, nationalities, etc., i.e., the **University of South Australia**; **Mitsubishi Motors**; **English/Vietnamese**; **Christians**; **Buddhists**.
- Specific terms, i.e., the **Law of Gravity**; the **Theory of Relativity**; the **Olympic Games**.

3. For acronyms (words made from the first letters of other words) and some abbreviations

Examples:

- GST = **G**oods and **S**ervices **T**ax
- ESL = **E**nglish as a **S**econd **L**anguage
- UV = **U**ltraviolet
- TFN = **T**ax **F**ile **N**umber
- QANTAS = **Q**ueensland and **N**orthern **T**erritory **A**ir **S**ervice



4. When a word is used to identify a classification

Examples:

- Post-modernist writers
- Renaissance art
- Shakespearean plays

5. When writing the personal pronoun 'I'

Example:

- Arrangements are going well and I expect to be open for business by January 2019.

6. For the first word you use inside quotation marks for a direct quote

Example:

- Walker et al. (2001, p. 109) stated that, "The most critical time to guard against UV exposures is from childhood to the mid-teens."

Problems to watch for

1. Common name vs specific identity

Examples:

- Ali has decided to switch to **History** this year, and will be studying Australian History 1A. (incorrect)
- Ali has decided to switch to **history** this year, and will be studying Australian History 1A. (correct)*

*The word 'history' is a general name for a subject and so does not need a capital letter. Australian History 1A, on the other hand, refers to the title of a particular program. Consequently, it needs a capital letter.

- The moon orbits every 27 days around the earth
- It is a popular belief that lifeforms from other planets have visited Earth

*In the first sentence, 'the earth' is used to refer to our globe as one of the planetary bodies in the solar system and so does not need a capital letter. On the other hand, 'Earth', refers to the name of a particular planet, that is, the world as our home. Consequently, it needs a capital letter.

Activity

Decide where the capital letters need to be in the following paragraph.

good relationships among employees, and between managers and employees, produce bottom-line advantages (bentley, 1999; peters, 1988). hanson, (1996) found, for example, that the presence of good interpersonal relationships between managers and employees was three times more powerful in predicting profitability than the four next most powerful variables. moreover, delivering outstanding customer service is almost impossible without supportive communication.

See answers below

Answers

Good relationships among employees, and between managers and employees, produce bottom-line advantages (**B**entley, 1999; **P**eters, 1988). **H**anson (1996) found, for example, that the presence of good interpersonal relationships between managers and employees was three times more powerful in predicting profitability than the four next most powerful variables. **M**oreover, delivering outstanding customer service is almost impossible without supportive communication.