

## **Document 02: CAPITALIZATION**

If you intend to emphasize a word, do not simply capitalize the first letter. Instead, bold print it, underline it, italicize it, or write the entire word in uppercase. Capitalize only for the following reasons:

### **Proper Nouns**

Capitalize words that refer specifically by name.

**People:** Hortense H. Hupplenicker

**Places:** Minneapolis .the Midwest. Florida. Chesapeake Bay. Columbia Avenue. The Middle East. The Oval Office. Mount Vernon

**Races and Languages :** Caucasian. Spanish

### **Days of the Week,**

### **Months, Special**

**Days** (not seasons):

Tuesday

July

Easter

Halloween

**Historical Periods** the Roaring Twenties

**and Events:** the Great Depression

the Dark Ages

**Trade Names:** Plexiglas, Corning Ware

**Deity:** God

**Companies:** IBM has developed a state-of-the-art software package for your application. Our company is trying to mimic that IBM software package. (The word *company* in the second sentence is not capitalized even though the writer is referring specifically to a particular company. The writer used

only a generic reference to the company, not the specific company name.)

**NOTE:** You may capitalize words such as *company*, *bank*, *organization*, or *buyer* in documents such as formal policy statements or contracts when these words have first been identified in full and when they are used as "nicknames" throughout the remainder of the document. Mr. and Mrs. Jenzenne Jabwok, hereafter referred to as Buyers, deny all claims. Additionally, Buyers will provide . . .

First National Bank (later referred to as Bank) will not assume liability in the following cases:

1. When Bank gives written notice of foreclosure
2. When Bank has no power of attorney

## **158 GOOD GRIEF, GOOD GRAMMAR**

### **Positions or Job Titles**

Capitalize a position title only when it *precedes* a name as a person's specific title. Do not capitalize a title when it follows or replaces a name.

John Dasharound, vice president of marketing, has signed the agreement.

Vice President of Marketing John Dasharound has signed the agreement.

Do not capitalize a generic reference to a position or organization.

All the senators think . . .

Our club voted . . .

Company officials today predicted that . . .

**NOTE:** Do not capitalize titles of state, federal, or international officials of high distinction such as the President of the United States or cabinet members (but not local or company officials).

### **Other Uses of Capitalization**

#### *First Letters of Sentences*

The telephone is the biggest time-saver and timewaster ever invented.

#### *First Word of Direct Quotes*

The contract specifically states, "We will not engage in litigation involving Anwart Inc."

**NOTE:** Do not capitalize the first word of a direct quote if it continues, rather than begins, a sentence.

Your boss admitted that she was "sick and tired" of your attitude.

#### *First Word of Independent Questions Within Sentences*

The issue is, Will this mean a larger profit?

(Also correct: *The issue is, will. . . ?*)

#### *First Word of Items in a Formal List*

Here are items you will need to bring to our meeting:

- Calculator
- Previous contracts
- Departmental policy statements
- Aspirin

#### *First Word and All Principal Words in Headings or Titles*

The Economic Disaster of the Research Department

*The Foggy Fortress of Finance* is a 500-page book that advises little more than to stay out of the stock market. This book also suggests that investors stay away from tax-exempt bonds. (Even though the second sentence refers specifically to the earlier named book, the book is not called by its title in the second sentence. Therefore, *book* should not be capitalized.)

**NOTE:** Do not capitalize *a*, *an*, or *the* or prepositions of fewer than four letters such as *in*, *by*, or *for* unless they are the first or last word of a heading or a title.

#### *First Word of Each Line of Poetry*

Budgets are red,

People are blue.

I'm tired of this,

How about you?

#### *First and Principal Words in Addresses*

John True, Vice Chairman

Department of Finance

1122 Shogun

Knowntown, TX

#### *First Words in Salutations and Closings*

Dear John,

My dear Mr. Snodgrass:

Sincerely yours,

*I, Oh*

Yes, I am willing to accept a raise if that will make you feel better about my performance.

You're giving me a raise; Oh, how nice!

Source: Dianna Bouher. Good Grief Good, good Grammar- the Business Person's guide to Grammar and Usage.. United States of America. 1998.