



8. Using Capital Letters

English uses capital letters to point out important words. This is the one element of English grammar that always follows its rules. There are no lists of exceptions to memorize. That makes it easier for people who are learning English. All they need to do is:

- learn the rules, and
- follow the rules.

You will see many examples in your everyday life of the rules being violated by advertisers, by graffiti artists and by internet users. That does not, however, change the rules. It is important to write English correctly on applications, in resumes, in business letters and in other formal situations if you want the reader to have a high opinion of you.

Rule 1: All sentences begin with a capital letter.

- This is my house. (statement)
- Are you going to school? (question)
- Watch out for the truck! (exclamation)

Rule 2: The proper name, the name of a specific person or thing, begins with a capital letter. All other important words in the name must also start with a capital letter. Words that do not need to be written with a capital letter unless they are the first word of the name are *a, an, and, the, of, to, by, etc.* (Following each proper name are one or more common names of the same type of person or thing which do not need a capital letter.)

- Henry David Thoreau (a man, a writer)
- Empire State Building (a building, a monument)
- Grand Canyon (a canyon, a geographical wonder)
- Atlantic Ocean (an ocean, a body of water)
- Metropolitan Museum of Art (a museum, an institute)