

Students:

You may split this packet into 5 days.

LESSON

12

Checking Capitalization and Spelling

LESSON SUMMARY

Capitalization and spelling are two of the most important parts of your writing. The first half of this lesson discusses which words to capitalize in a sentence, including proper nouns and adjectives. The second half offers general spelling rules and a list of commonly misspelled words. To proofread your writing expertly, it is good to have knowledge of these fundamentals.

Following are some general rules that can be applied to almost any situation in your writing.

- *First Words*

Capitalize the first word of a sentence. If the first word is a number, write it as a word.

Example

Thirty-five soldiers lined up in front of the barracks.

- *I, B.C.E., A.D.*

Capitalize the pronoun *I*, including when it is used in the contraction *I'm*. The abbreviations *B.C.E.* and *A.D.* appear as small caps.

■ *Quotation*

Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation. A direct quotation contains a person's exact words, whether they were spoken or written.

Example

Theodore Roosevelt said, "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

- Do not capitalize the first word of a quoted sentence fragment.

Example

I agree with Theodore Roosevelt when he said to "carry a big stick."

■ *Poetry*

Traditionally in poetry, the first word in each line is capitalized, although poetry is a form of writing that commonly breaks the rules of grammar. Many contemporary poets do not always use the traditional forms. Very often you will read poetry in which the first lines are not capitalized, and sometimes there are no capitalized words in the entire poem.

► **Exercise 1**

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. a. my coffee was cold, so I asked the waiter to bring me a fresh cup.
b. My coffee was cold, so I asked the waiter to bring me a fresh cup.
c. My coffee was cold, so i asked the waiter to bring me a fresh cup.
2. a. We studied cave paintings dated some time before 600 b.c.e.
b. we studied cave paintings dated some time before 600 B.C.E.
c. We studied cave paintings dated some time before 600 B.C.E.
3. a. Shirley said, "My cactus has been over-watered!"
b. Shirley said, "my cactus has been over-watered!"
c. shirley said, "My cactus has been over-watered!"
4. a. I have never heard of a plant being "Over-watered."
b. i have never heard of a plant being "Over-watered."
c. I have never heard of a plant being "over-watered."

► **Proper Nouns and Proper Adjectives**

All nouns and adjectives that name a specific person, place, or thing must be capitalized. These are called *proper nouns* and *proper adjectives*. You must know which words to capitalize in order to successfully proofread, edit, and revise your paper.

Names of People

Examples

Doug Forrest, Madonna, Martin Luther King, Jr., Liam McAndrew, Christine MacMurray, James McDonald, Bob O'Casey, Juan de la Cruz, Jean LaFitte, Ali ben-Ari

It is necessary to find out exactly how to spell and capitalize names, as the custom varies. It is important to get names right as a sign of respect and because incorrect capitalization of a name could indicate a different person.

Family Members

Examples

Uncle Jeff, Aunt Sharon, Cousin Heidi, Grandma, Grandpa, Dad, Mom, my cousin Karl

When a possessive like *my* comes first, do not capitalize the relationship word.

Example

my dad

Brand Names of Products

Examples

Boar's Head® ham, Band-Aid®, Kleenex®, Volkswagen® Jetta

Official Titles

Examples

Mayor Jefferson, Governor Davis, Justice O'Connor, President Carter, Superintendent Levy, Dean Ross, Prime Minister Sulla, Secretary General Annan, Queen Elizabeth

Capitalize the title only when followed by a name. If the person is a high government official or someone to whom you wish to show respect, you may capitalize the title when it is not followed by a name.

Examples

Dr. Fitzgerald, chancellor of schools; Halle Chapman, class president; the Secretary of State; the Prince of Wales

Names of Structures and Buildings

Examples

Empire State Building, Golden Gate Bridge, Space Needle, Veteran's Stadium

Do not capitalize the unimportant words of the name of a structure or building.

Examples

Mall of the Americas, Bridge of the Gods, Tavern on the Green

Exercise 2

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 5. a. He made a sandwich out of wonder bread® and oven-gold turkey.
- b. He made a sandwich out of Wonder Bread® and Ovengold® turkey.

- 6. a. Uncle Fred sat next to my cousin Brenna.
- b. Uncle Fred sat next to my Cousin Brenna.

- 7. a. Many citizens appreciated mayor Giuliani's presence at the many funerals.
- b. Many citizens appreciated Mayor Giuliani's presence at the many funerals.

- 8. a. Her cycling trip did not cross the Bridge of the Gods.
- b. Her cycling trip did not cross the bridge of the Gods.

Ethnic Groups, Races, Languages, and Nationalities

Examples

Asian American, French, Latino, Japanese

Avoid capitalizing words modified by proper adjectives such as the ones above.

Examples

Mexican restaurant (unless the restaurant is named, such as Consuela's Mexican Restaurant), British beer, African music

Historical Events, Periods, Documents

Examples

Revolutionary War, Middle Ages, Bronze Age, Bill of Rights

Cities, States, and Governmental Units

Examples

Tuscaloosa, North Dakota; People’s Republic of China

Capitalize the proper adjective form of cities and states, also.

Examples

Alabaman, Seattleite, Idahoan, Rhode Islander

Institutions, Organizations, and Businesses

Examples

Evergreen State College, Wesleyan University, Girl Scouts®, First Independence Bank

Exercise 3

Circle the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 9. a. President Lincoln wrote the gettysburg address.
b. President Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address.
- 10. a. For my birthday, we ate Chinese food and saw a movie.
b. For my birthday, we ate chinese food and saw a movie.
- 11. a. My brother Dean attended North Seattle Community College.
b. My brother Dean attended north seattle community college.

- 12. a. The Indianapolis 500 is a huge event for Indianans.
b. The Indianapolis 500 is a huge event for indianans.

Days of the Week

Examples

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday

Months

Examples

June, November

Special Events and Calendar Events

Examples

Fall Harvest Festival, The Great American Smoke-out, Spring Break, Groundhog’s Day, Father’s Day

Holidays

Examples

Christmas, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year

Exercise 4

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 13. a. My birthday falls on a sunday.
b. My birthday falls on a Sunday.
- 14. a. The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.
b. The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.
- 15. a. My friend hopes to run in the boston marathon.
b. My friend hopes to run in the Boston Marathon.
- 16. a. It was not as cold last February.
b. It was not as cold last february.

Works of Art and Literature*Examples*

Romeo and Juliet (play), *The Scarlet Letter* (book),
Mean Streets (film), “Where the Sidewalk Ends”
 (poem), *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (painting)

Names of Trains, Ships, and Other Modes of Transportation*Examples*

Discovery, Mayflower, United Airlines, Starlight
 Express

Streets, Highways, and Roads*Examples*

Broadway, Interstate 80, Best Road, Fiftieth
 Avenue

Public Parks and Bodies of Water*Examples*

Deception Pass, Rio Grande, Washougal National
 Forest, Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, Central
 Park

Exercise 5

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence.
 Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

17. a. Amanda sailed across the pacific ocean
 from Seattle to Maui.

b. Amanda sailed across the Pacific Ocean
 from Seattle to Maui.

18. a. Jessica brought her cat home to Woodlawn
 Avenue.

b. Jessica brought her cat home to Woodlawn
 avenue.

19. a. Of all of Edward Hopper’s paintings,
Nighthawks is still my favorite.

b. Of all of Edward Hopper’s paintings,
nighthawks is still my favorite.

20. a. We rode a Trailways® bus to Mount
 Rushmore.

b. We rode a trailways® bus to Mount
 Rushmore.

► To Capitalize or Not to Capitalize**Direction Words**

Avoid capitalizing directions on the compass *unless*
 they name a specific area of the country.

Example

Several population centers are on the East Coast.

Example

Many African-Americans headed north to find
 factory work.

Seasons

Avoid capitalizing the seasons or the parts of an aca-
 demic year.

Example

In the fall term, I hope to take Mr. Lackey’s class.

School Subjects

Avoid capitalizing school subjects *unless* they name
 a specific course. Always capitalize English because
 it is the name of a language.

Example

I still have the textbook from that history course.

Example

I don’t know why we have to take Biology I before
 we can do lab work.

Example

My English class met at 1:00 in the afternoon.

Exercise 6

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 21. a.** For the series with the Giants, the Braves headed west.
b. For the series with the Giants, the Braves headed West.
- 22. a.** Kara needs to be excused from math class today.
b. Kara needs to be excused from Math class today.
- 23. a.** I plan to go to Puerto Rico in the Summer.
b. I plan to go to Puerto Rico in the summer.
- 24. a.** The Midwest had a very mild winter last year.
b. The midwest had a very mild winter last year.

► General Spelling Rules

The English language combines words from many different languages, and they do not always look the way they sound. If you know another language, such as Spanish, French, Greek, or Latin, that will help you spell in English because many English words are derived from those languages. It will also help you practice spelling correctly, just like you must practice increasing your vocabulary. When you learn a new word, concentrate not only on what it means, but how to spell it. There are also many rules to help you spell, and almost as many exceptions. Knowing the rules will help you when you write a word that you are not sure how to spell.

ie vs. ei**The Rule**

When the *ie* combination sounds like long *e* (*ee*), the rule is: *i* before *e* except after *c*.

Examples

belief fierce cashier fiend wield yield
 series chief achieve niece hygiene relieve

Exceptions

The *ie* combination comes after *c* when it sounds like *sh* or *sy*.

Examples

deficient conscience omniscient ancient
 society science

The examples above come from the Greek root *scient*, which means knowing. *Science* means knowing.

The Rule

When the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like *ay*, the rule is: *e* before *i*.

Examples

neighbor weigh eight feint freight reign
 sleigh surveillance veil vein weight skein

Exceptions

Sometimes the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like *ee*.

Examples

either weird seizure sheik leisure seize

Sometimes the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like long *i*.

Examples

height sleight stein seismology

Sometimes the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like short *e*.

Examples

their heifer foreign forfeit

Exercise 7

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 25.** He did not know his exact (**hieght, height**).
- 26.** The tape player broke, so the songs sounded (**wierd, weird**).
- 27.** The dentist told the girls about dental (**hygeine, hygiene**).
- 28.** I did not mean to (**deceive, decieve**) you.

► **Vowel Combinations**

The Rule

When two vowels are together, the first one is usually long and the second one is silent.

Examples

reach cheapen conceal caffeine paisley
abstain acquaint juice nuisance buoy

Exceptions

Sometimes the pair *ai* makes an *uh* sound.

Examples

Britain porcelain fountain villain curtain
certain captain chieftain

Sometimes you pronounce both parts of the vowel pair *ia*.

Examples

civilian brilliant alleviate familiar genial
congenial menial guardian

Sometimes *ia* are combined with *t* or *c* to make a *sh* sound.

Examples

artificial glacial beneficial martial
commercial

► **Silent Vowels**

American English makes several vowels silent, but there is no general rule for silent vowels. For example, sometimes a silent *e* on the end of a word makes the vowel before it long, sometimes not. The best way to approach these oddly spelled words is to become familiar with them by sight.

Examples

carriage marriage every chocolate
miniature parliament privilege sophomore
boundary towel vowel bowel

Exercise 8

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 29.** The (**captain, captian**) sounded the alarm.
- 30.** Pleased to make your (**acquiantance, acquaintance**).
- 31.** Jill is a (**sophomore, sophmore**) in college.
- 32.** The hotel bathroom had a (**porcelan, porcelain**) sink.

► Consonants

In addition to silent vowels, the English language uses silent consonants. Like silent vowels, silent consonants do not follow a general rule. The best way to learn these words is by sight, just like with silent vowels.

Examples

answer autumn calm debt ghost gnarled
gnaw indict kneel knight know
knowledge often subtle blight pseudonym
psychology rhetorical thorough through
write

► Doubling Consonants

Consonants are usually doubled when adding an ending, or *suffix*, to a word.

Rule #1

When the suffix begins with a vowel (such as *-ed*, *-ing*, *-ance*, *-ence*, or *-ant*) and the word ends with one vowel and one consonant, double the last consonant.

Examples

Cut becomes *cutter* or *cutting*.
Slip becomes *slipping* or *slipped*.
Quit becomes *quitter* or *quitting*.

Rule #2

When the final consonant of the word is accented and there is only one consonant in the last syllable, double the final consonant.

Examples

Commit becomes *committing* or *committed*.
Defer becomes *deferring* or *deferred*.
Prefer becomes *preferring* or *preferred*.

Rule #3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the final *n* when adding *-ness* and keep the final *l* when adding *-ly*.

Examples

Mean becomes *meanness*.
Lean becomes *leanness*.
Legal becomes *legally*.
Formal becomes *formally*.

► The Exceptions

There are only a few exceptions to the above rules. Below are just a few examples.

Examples

Draw becomes *drawing*.
Bus becomes *buses*.
Chagrin becomes *chagrined*.

► C and G

The letters *c* and *g* can be either soft or hard. A hard *c* sounds like *k*, a soft *c* sounds like *s*. A hard *g* sounds like the *g* in *girl*, a soft *g* sounds like *j*.

The Rule

The letters *c* and *g* are soft when followed by *e*, *i*, or *y*. Otherwise, they are hard.

Examples

SOFT SOUNDS

circus cycle cell circle cyclone central
giant gyrate genius gipsy gymnastics
gentle

HARD SOUNDS

case cousin corporate couple click crop
go gab gobble glue grimy gout

The Exceptions

When a word ends in hard *c*, add a *k* before a suffix that begins in *-e*, *-i*, or *-y*.

Examples

Traffic becomes *trafficking*

Mimic becomes *mimicking*

The Exceptions to the Exception

Very few words keep the soft *c* sound when a suffix beginning with *i* is used.

plasticity elasticity

Exercise 9

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 33.** He gave me a (**suttle, subtle**) hint about my gift.
- 34.** Sharon was not guilty of (**commiting, committing**) the crime.
- 35.** When the subway suddenly stopped, some people began (**panicing, panicking**).
- 36.** The contract was (**legally, legaly**) binding.

► Final E**Rule #1**

Drop the final *e* when adding a suffix that begins with a vowel, such as *-ing*, *-able*, *-ous*, or *-ity*.

Examples

Surprise becomes *surprising*.

Leave becomes *leaving*.

Desire becomes *desirable*.

Erase becomes *erasable*.

Grieve becomes *grievous*.

Desire becomes *desirous*.

Opportune becomes *opportunity*.

Scarce becomes *scarcity*.

The Exceptions

Keep the final *e* after a soft *c* or soft *g* to keep the soft sound.

Examples

Peace becomes *peaceable*.

Advantage becomes *advantageous*.

Outrage becomes *outrageous*.

Keep the final *e* when the pronunciation of the word would be changed if you dropped the *e*.

Examples

Guarantee becomes *guaranteeing*.

Snowshoe becomes *snowshoeing*.

Rule #2

Keep the final *e* before endings that begin with consonants, such as *-ment*, *-ness*, *-less*, and *-ful*.

Examples

advertisement enforcement amusement

politeness fierceness appropriateness wireless

tireless blameless disgraceful tasteful

peaceful

The Exceptions

Drop the final *e* when it comes after the letters *u* or *w*.

Examples

argue becomes *argument*

true becomes *truly*

awe becomes *awful*

► Final Y

When adding a suffix, a final *y* is sometimes changed to an *i*.

Rule #1

When you add a suffix to a word ending in *y*, keep the *y* if it follows a vowel.

Examples

attorneys chimneys monkeys keys stayed
delayed played relayed playing relaying
staying saying annoyance conveyance
employable playable

The Exceptions

Examples

say becomes said
money becomes monies
day becomes daily

Rule #2

When you add a suffix to a word ending in *y*, change the *y* to an *i* if it follows a consonant.

Examples

Mercy becomes merciful.
Pity becomes pitiful.
Beauty becomes beautiful.
Busy becomes business.
Crazy becomes craziness.
Lazy becomes laziness.
Angry becomes angrily.
Busy becomes busily.
Healthy becomes healthily.
Salary becomes salaries.
Busy becomes busies.
Flurry becomes flurries.

The Exceptions

When you add *-ing*, keep the final *y*.

Examples

Copy becomes copying.
Busy becomes busying.
Study becomes studying.

► -able and -ible

-able Rule #1

If a root word takes the *-ation* suffix, it usually takes *-able*.

Examples

demonstration—demonstrable
imagination—imaginable
application—applicable

-able Rule #2

If a root word is a complete word by itself, it usually takes *-able*.

Examples

drink—drinkable
read—readable
search—searchable
bear—bearable

-able Rule #3

If a word ends in hard *c* or *g*, it uses the suffix *-able*.

Examples

despicable navigable applicable

-ible Rule #1

If a word ends in soft *c* or *g*, it takes *-ible*.

Example

forcible invincible legible incorrigible

-ible Rule #2

If a word ends in *-ss*, it usually takes *-ible*.

Examples

repress–repressible
access–accessible
permiss–permissible
dismiss–dismissible

-ible Rule #3

If a root word is not a whole word, it usually takes *-ible*.

Example

responsible

-ible Rule #4

If a word takes the *-ion* suffix, it usually takes *-ible*.

Examples

collection–collectible
vision–visible
division–divisible

Exception

Predict–prediction becomes *predictable*.

► -ary and -ery**The Rule**

The rule is that only two common words end in *-ery*: *cemetery* and *stationery* (as in “paper and envelopes for letter-writing”). The rest take *-ary*.

Examples

stationary (as in “unmoving”) dictionary
military library secretary vocabulary
solitary secondary voluntary

► -al and -el**The Rule**

The rule here is that most words use *-al*. Unfortunately, there is no real rule. These words call for sight memorizing.

Examples of -al words

choral dismissal legal literal tribal
personal several neutral moral magical
lyrical festival

Examples of -el words

cancel model kennel jewel tunnel travel
shovel panel cruel towel channel hovel

► Prefixes**The Rule**

Usually, when you add a prefix to a root word, the spelling of neither the root nor the prefix changes.

Examples

misinformed unprepared disillusioned
infrequent illegitimate misspelled unnerved
dissatisfied

Exercise 10

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers are provided at the end of the lesson.

- 37.** She became the (~~Secretary~~, Secretary) of State.
- 38.** The (~~desirable~~, desireable) parking spot is next to the entrance.
- 39.** The lost dog looked so (~~pitiful~~, pityful).

40. Laura was (responsible, responsible) for the entire project.

Summary

Whether it is capitalization or spelling, there are rules to learn and to follow. Unfortunately, there are many exceptions to the rules. As you work to improve your writing, and continue to proofread, revise, and edit, learn to recognize the words that need capitalization and memorize the correct spellings by sight.