

Common Capitalization Errors

1. Capitalize compass directions only if the word designates a specific geographical region.

- *John Muir headed **west**, motivated by the desire to explore.
- *Ken divided the map into sections: the **Northeast**, the **South**, and the **West**.
- *In the **Great Plains** area of the **Midwest** tornadoes ravage the countryside.
- ***The Spanish Peaks** are in the **Rocky Mountains**.

2. Do not capitalize seasons of the year or parts of the academic or financial year.

- *spring
- *winter
- *autumn
- *fall semester
- *third-quarter earnings

3. Capitalize family relationships only if the word is used as part of a name or as a substitute for the name.

- *When she was a child, my **mother** shared a room with her aunt.
- *The train on which **Uncle Robert** arrived spewed out thick black smoke.
- *I could always tell when **Mother** was annoyed with **Aunt Rose**.

4. Capitalize the names of particular structures, special events, monuments, vehicles and so on.

- *the Titanic
- *the World Series
- *the Eiffel Tower

5. Capitalize philosophic, literary, and artistic movements.

- *Naturalism
- *Romanticism
- *Neoclassicism

6. Capitalize races, ethnic groups, nationalities, and languages.

- *African American
- *Caucasian
- *Latino
- *English

7. Capitalize specific academic courses, but not general areas of study.

- *Sociology 201
- *English 101
- *Although his major was **sociology**, he took **English 101**.

8. Do not capitalize diseases and other medical terms unless a proper noun is part of the name or unless the disease is an acronym.

- *polio
- *mumps
- *Reye's syndrome
- *AIDS