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