

The rules of capitalization

The rules of capitalization in English can be quite confusing. Most students understand that they should begin a sentence with a capital letter. They also understand that proper nouns (e.g. Mark, Mary) should be capitalized.

However, the most common mistakes occur with national adjectives and the names of languages.

If you find the rules of capitalization confusing, this article will be helpful to you.

Capitalize 'I'

Capitalize the names of countries. Examples: Japan, America, Russia

Capitalize national nouns and adjectives. Examples: Chinese, Russian, French, British

Capitalize the first letter of the first word in a sentence or question.

Capitalize proper nouns (i.e. the names of people). Examples: John, Mary, Annie

Do not capitalize common nouns. Examples: boy, tree, flower, butterfly

Capitalize the names of institutions, organizations etc.

Capitalize the names of festivals. Examples: Id, Diwali, Easter, Christmas

Study the examples given below.

He went to university.

University is a common noun and hence we do not capitalize it.

He went to Oxford University. (NOT He went to oxford university.)

The names of universities, organizations, institutions, mountains, deserts and rivers are capitalized. Note that when you write the name of a university or an organization, all words in the name begin with capital letters.

Examples

British Broadcasting Corporation (NOT British broadcasting corporation)

United Nations Organization (NOT United nations organization)

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Notes

In British English, the article 'the' is not normally used before the names of universities, public buildings or organizations. However, in American English, 'the' is more often used in such cases.

He studied at the Harvard University. (US)

Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. He introduced me to mary, his wife.
2. I don't understand french, but I can speak a little spanish.
3. They went skiing in the alps.
4. She bought a new Car for her birthday.
5. Peter comes from new england.

Answers

1. He introduced me to Mary, his wife.
2. I don't understand French, but I can speak a little Spanish.
3. They went skiing in the Alps.
4. She bought a new car for her birthday.
5. Peter comes from New England.