

## Capital letters

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Most people know that every sentence should begin with a capital letter. There are, however, other times to use them. Although you may decide not to use capital letters in an SMS, they are expected, where appropriate, in most professional writing.

### Use capitals for:

- the names of particular people, places or things (Proper Nouns).

Examples: George [proper name]

Gosford [place]

Goulburn Police Station [thing]

However capitals are **not** used for general terms for people, places or things

Examples:

A doctor came to the lecture but Doctor Smith came...

I met the judge but I met Judge Webster

The sergeant but Sergeant Jones

The hospital but St John of God Hospital

A game of footie but the Bledisloe Cup final

The grand final but a State of Origin match

A politician, a painter, a parliamentarian, a police officer, the police, the security guard

- the word “I” when referring to yourself.

This is called a pronoun because it stands in the place of a noun [naming word].

- the first word in a sentence or question

Eg **H**is boss asked, “**A**re you going soon?”

- titles before a name or terms of rank

Eg Pope John Paul II, Queen Elizabeth II, Inspector Chadwick, Sir Bob Geldof.

- document and book titles

Eg *The Da Vinci Code* or *NSW Police Document Standards and Publication Management*.

Note that small words like a, an, and, the, in, on, to, of, if, at, us are **not** capitalised unless they are the first word of the title.

- identifying words in addresses

Eg 12 Riverside Drive

- days of the week, months and special days

Eg Wednesday, February, Christmas Day, Hanukkah, New Year’s Eve

- the proper name of an historical event

Eg First World War, the Depression

- chapter headings, Table of Contents, Index

- names of organisations, clubs, unions, companies and government departments

Eg Red Cross, Rotary Club, NSW Police, Westpac

- names of races, tribes, nationalities and languages

Eg Asian, South American, Bantu, Arrente, Aborigines, Italians, the Indonesian language

- names of religious orders, faiths and denominations, saints, deities, holy days, fast and feast days & scriptures

- name of awards, medals, and decorations

Eg Victoria Cross, Order of Australia, Duke of Edinburgh Award

- laws and amendments and superior court names

Eg Crimes Act, Supreme Court

**Do not use capitals for:**

- Compass points unless it is part of a name

Eg The car turned north at the North Pole.

- Seasons when describing time of year unless it is part of an event

Eg It is a fine spring day but... Spring Racing Carnival

- References to pages, paragraphs, sentences, verses, lines

Eg page 22, paragraph 5, fifth sentence, third verse, line 1145

- General references to religious sacraments, rituals and services

Eg a funeral, a baptism, the wedding, her prayer

- General references to military or police rank or departments

Eg an inspector, a major, the sergeant, a magistrate, probationary constables, a youth liaison officer, army personnel.

Adapted from

Jakob, K. (1991). *A guide to police writing*. Canada: Carswell.

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