



CAPITAL LETTERS

Punctuation is an integral part of writing. It is a means of organising and giving your writing meaning, and assisting the reader to understand your writing.

The rules for punctuation are different in all languages and knowing which letters to capitalise is a key part of punctuation.

These notes focus on the most important rules for capitalisation to guide you in your writing.

STUDY TIPS

In IELTS Writing Task 1 and Writing Task 2 it is important to check that you have followed the rules for using capital letters correctly.

Remember it is best to learn these rules, but when in doubt about which words to capitalise, always consult a dictionary.

RULES FOR CAPITALISATION

Punctuation is an integral part of writing. It provides the tools, which tell your reader when to stop, pause, answer a question, be surprised, know another thought begins and provides many other important signals.

It is also a means of organising and giving your writing meaning. There are a number of punctuation tools, including the full stop (.), comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), apostrophe ('), hyphen (-), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), capital letters and others.

These notes focus on capital letters. Using capital letters correctly in English requires attention. There are rules that determine which words to capitalise.

The following chart summarises the main uses of capitalisation, and should be learnt.

STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Capitalisation Rules	Examples
1 a. first word of a sentence	a. S ugar is an important commodity for Australia.
b. first word of a quoted sentence	b. The archaeologist said, "The fossils could not be from the pre-Cambrian era."
2. Pronoun 'I'	Though the scores were good, I remained sceptical of the results.
3. Proper Names and Nouns	a. Mr. and Mrs. L. Jones ; Professor Parker ; Princess Mary ; The election that will be held in September will decide who the next prime minister will be. Because of the recent crisis, the Prime Minister will be addressing the nation tonight.
a. title and the proper name; titles are not capitalised without a name unless it clearly refers to one person	b. C hinese, T hai, J apanese, A ustralian, I ndian, V ietnamese, A sian, C aucasian
b. languages, nationalities, racial and ethnic groups	c. B uddhism (B uddhist), C hristianity (C hristian), I slam (M uslim/ M oslem), J udaism (J ew), B uddha, G od, A llah, C hristmas, R amadan, P assover, the V eda, the B ible, the K oran
c. religions, deities, holy days, holy books	d. C hina, A ustralia, B eijing, B angkok, S ydney, M ain S treet, B lue M ountains, Y angtse R iver, the S outh P ole; n orth, s outh, e ast, w est, the M iddle E ast, S outh A merica, eastern N ew S outh W ales
d. geographic areas, including countries, cities, streets, mountains, rivers; compass directions are not capitalised unless they refer to the formal name of a geographic, political area	e. O pera H ouse, H arbour B ridge, the G reat W all of C hina, W est L ake
e. specific structures, including buildings, bridges, monuments	f. W orld W ar 1, the M ing D ynasty, the M iddle A ges, R enaissance, R omantic era
f. historical events, periods and eras	g. W ednesday, F ebruary, A nzac D ay, A ustralia D ay, C hinese N ew Y ear, N ational D ay; s pring, s ummer, a utumn (f all), w inter
g. days of the week, months and holidays; seasons are not capitalised	h. A ustralian B roadcasting C orporation, I nsearch, U niversity of T echnology
h. organisations, businesses, schools, companies	i. E conomics 102, I ntroduction to B usiness C ommunication, m athematics, s cience, a cademic E nglish
i. titles of school subjects and school subjects with a course number; fields of study are not capitalised	
4. Abbreviations and Acronyms	ABC – Australian Broadcasting Corporation; UTS – University of Technology, Sydney; UN – United Nations; IELTS – International English Language Testing System
5. titles of books, poems, films, magazines, newspapers, television programs, play, opera (articles, prepositions and conjunctions are not capitalised unless they appear as the first or last word in the title)	L ord of the R ings, T he M an from S nowy R iver, S tudy E nglish! I ELTS P reparation, S wan L ake, S ydney M orning H erald, N ational G eographic