

# CAPITAL LETTERS

Here is a list of conventions for using capital letters in academic writing with some examples and notes. The guide is based on the Australian Government's *Style manual* 6th edn, (2002), and the *Macquarie Dictionary* 6th edn (2013).

Convention	Examples
<p><b>1. The first word of a sentence or quoted speech</b></p>	<p>My first essay is due tomorrow. The minister said, 'That compromise is not justified'.</p>
<p><b>2. The pronoun 'I'</b></p>	<p>James and I are in the same group.</p>
<p><b>3. Abbreviations and acronyms—formed from the first letters of words</b></p> <p>BUT NOT the words they refer to – unless they are capitalised</p>	<p><b>RMIT</b>    <b>ABC</b>    <b>ANZ</b>    <b>TAFE</b> <b>USB</b>    <b>ASAP</b>    <b>DVDs</b>    <b>AIDS</b></p> <p>Australian <b>B</b>roadcasting <b>C</b>orporation, but ... as soon as possible,    digital video discs, acquired immune deficiency syndrome</p>
<p><b>4. Proper nouns (names)</b></p> <p><b>a. names of people and their titles, nicknames and epithets</b></p> <p>BUT NOT a title without a name (except when it clearly refers to a particular person, e.g. the President meaning US President Obama)</p>	<p>Jenny    Brian    Ying-Li    Mr Nathan Buckley Ms Karen Martini    Prime Minister Julia Gillard Professor Margaret Gardiner    Father Brennan the Iron Lady</p> <p>a professor of history,    the former prime minister the former president    a doctor    an imam</p>
<p><b>b. names of specific groups of people, languages and religions</b></p>	<p>Australian    Balinese    Koori    Arrente Khmer    Muslim    Asian    Arabic</p> <p>NOTE: Aboriginal and Indigenous are used to refer to Australia's first peoples.</p>
<p><b>c. names of specific places on a map</b></p>	<p>Cardigan Street    Sydney Road New York City    Federation Square</p>
<p><b>d. titles: the first, last, and all important words in titles</b> including books, newspapers, magazines, newspapers, plays, films, stories, songs, art works, television programs</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Italicise (or underline) <i>names</i> of books, magazines, newspapers, art works, plays, films, television and radio programs</p>	<p>'All My Loving'    'Hallelujah'    'Yesterday' How the Kangaroo Got Her Pouch    <i>The Block</i></p> <p><i>Introduction to Academic Writing</i>    <i>Dr Zhivago</i> <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>    <i>The Age</i>    <i>Time Magazine</i> <i>Mona Lisa</i>    <i>The Thinker</i>    <i>Hamlet</i> <i>Macquarie Thesaurus</i>    <i>The Sapphires</i>    <i>RN Breakfast</i></p>
<p><b>e. names of specific geographic areas</b></p> <p>BUT NOT the names of compass direction</p>	<p>South-East Asia    Southern Ocean East Gippsland    Middle East east of the city    turn south</p>

STUDY TIPS

Convention	Examples
f. <b>time indicators:</b> names of days, months, special religious days and public events, historical and cultural periods  BUT NOT the names of seasons	Monday    Australia Day    Good Friday November    Yom Kippur    Ramadan New Year's Day    Mother's Day    AFL Grand Final the Depression    the Renaissance    the Great War  summer    winter    autumn
g. <b>names of specific structures</b>	The Great Wall of China    Parliament House    Myer Building 8 Princes Bridge    The Arts Centre
h. <b>names of organisations</b>	Curtin University    Carlton Football Club    Red Cross United Nations    Northcote Primary School Fitzroy Community Credit Co-op
i. <b>names of deities</b>	God    Allah    Buddha
j. <b>names of courses and school subjects with numbers</b>  BUT NOT the names of classes without numbers, except languages	MATH2123 Mathematics and Statistics Chemistry Unit 3    HUSO2162 Social History of Ideas  history    Russian literature    design studio maths    architectural drawing

**Other recommendations for capitals**

**1. Always show a proper name in the style the owner uses**

MacDonald or Macdonald;    Dall'Ava;    van Schaik;    Salman bin Abdulaziz  
HarperCollins;    PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)    Coca-Cola;    Coke

**2. Use capitals for the name and abbreviated names BUT NOT for the generic**

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (specific); Immigration (shortened but specific); the department (generic)

University of Western Sydney ... the university (generic)

Kangaroo Island (specific) ... the island (generic)

South Gippsland Shire Council ... the shire council ... the council

**3. Use capitals in a title of direct address BUT NOT when referring to the position**

e.g. in a letter: The Managing Director ... BUT: She is the managing director (generic)

e.g. 'We think, Professor van Schaik, there may be other options' ... BUT: He is a professor of architecture.

He has a position as a teacher of English as a second language and learning adviser at RMIT.

**4. Commercial terms**

Current trademarks, proprietary names and brand names should be capitalised. Brand and model names are capitalised (e.g. MacBook Pro, AutoCAD, Toyota Corolla, Collins Class submarine). Larger dictionaries, like the *Macquarie Dictionary*, usually show if a common term is a proprietary name.

**5. Follow the conventions of scientific naming**

In botany and zoology, all taxonomic groupings are capitalised down to the genus level.

In chemistry and medicine, chemical compounds are not capitalised.

Proprietary names of drugs and other chemicals are capitalised but generic names are presented in lower case (e.g. 'Panadol' but paracetamol).

Disease and virus names are not capitalised unless they contain a proper name.