

2. Capitalization

PROPER NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

2.1 Capitalize the names of organizations:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Government *but* Canadian government federal government

2.2 Capitalize personal titles when they are used with the person's name or alone:

Secretary of the Interior Smith

the Secretary of the Interior

2.3 Capitalize the formal names of programs:

the Chesapeake Bay Program *but* a habitat restoration program

2.4 Do not capitalize terms relating to general concepts, even when they include a person's name:

index of biotic integrity Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

2.5 Capitalize certain trade names:

Plexiglas Styrofoam

but formalin petri dish

To determine which trade names to capitalize, consult *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* or the current edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.

Also capitalize the formal titles of software programs:

Restriction Enzyme Analysis Package

2.6 Capitalize the names of ships and aircraft:

RV Seth Gordon

Note that only the name per se is italicized.

Geographic and Geological Terms

Sections 2.7–2.14 present the general principles governing the capitalization of these terms; a more detailed list is given in Appendix D. For geographic terms that are not on that list, consult *Webster’s New Geographical Dictionary*.¹

POLITICAL DIVISIONS

2.7 Capitalize all words that are parts of formal names:

Washington State *but* state of Washington

Province of Ontario *but* Canadian provinces

TOPOGRAPHICAL AND PLACE NAMES

2.8 Capitalize all words that are parts of formal names:

Catskill Mountains Colorado River Midwest North Atlantic Pacific Northwest

2.9 Do not capitalize words that are purely descriptive:

Hudson River valley

Gulf coast of Texas *but* Gulf Coast [as region]

upper Mississippi River *but* Upper Peninsula [Michigan]

2.10 Capitalize popular names:

Deep South

Eastern Shore [Maryland] *but* the eastern shore of Hudson Bay

West Coast [U.S.] *but* the western coast of Florida

2.11 Certain structures and defined areas should be capitalized:

Grand Coulee Dam

Lock 19 Pool 12 [Mississippi River]

¹ For several reasons, geographic terms sometimes have variant spellings. As far as possible, use the variants that are appropriate to American English, e.g., “Mexico” rather than the Spanish “México” (although the latter should be used in addresses and names of organizations in Spanish).

- 2.12** Do not capitalize generic terms used in the plural when they follow specific terms:

Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers *but* Lakes Erie and Ontario

Note that generic terms that are not used in the plural are capitalized even when they are part of compound expressions:

Rappahannock and Rapidan River floods

- 2.13** Do not capitalize shortened names:

the bay [referring to the previously named Chesapeake Bay]

GEOLOGICAL TERMS

- 2.14** With the exception noted in section 2.9, capitalize all parts of such terms:

Wisconsin Glaciation Burgess Shale

Appalachian Highlands Piedmont Province Tennessee Section

Upper Pennsylvanian Late Oligocene

Taxonomic Names

- 2.15** Capitalize all portions of the common names of fish species and subspecies but not those of hybrids and life history variants:

Largemouth Bass Lahontan Cutthroat Trout

but saugeye steelhead

Capitalize the names of genera but not those of specific epithets:

Oncorhynchus spp. *Ictalurus punctatus*

Capitalize the names of families, orders, classes, phyla, and kingdoms and the first component of species names:

Salmonidae *but* salmonids

Salmoniformes

Proper Adjectives

2.16 Capitalize adjectives derived from proper nouns:

Mendelian North American

OTHER USES

2.17 Capitalize terms such as “table,” “figure,” and “chapter” when they refer to specific items. Also capitalize terms such as “methods” and “results” when they refer to sections of a paper:

Table 1 Figure 2 Chapters 5–7

For additional details, see Methods. As noted in Results, . . .

Do not capitalize other identifying labels:

experiment 2 tank 3

2.18 Capitalize compass directions:

N ENE 10°6'N, 8°37'W

Note that latitude and longitude coordinates are separated by a comma and a space but that there are no spaces within the coordinates themselves.