A noun is a word for a person, place, or thing. For example, the sentence “The man arrived in London and ate a stew” contains three nouns: man, London, and stew.

Two kinds of nouns exist; proper nouns, which refer to specific places, institutions, or people, and common nouns, which refer to the type of function an institution represents, a certain kind of person, or an object.

The first letter of a proper noun is capitalized, whereas the first letter of a common noun remains lowercase. The following examples demonstrate how to recognize and capitalize a proper noun.

- Capitalize names of people such as Josef, Paula, Maria, and Thomas.
- Don’t capitalize the nouns referring to what kind of people they are such as boy, girl, woman, and man.
- Capitalize specific names of institutions, like the U.S. Congress, British Parliament, or Bank of America.
- Don’t capitalize the nouns referring to what kind of institution they are like a congress, a parliament, or a bank (these usually are accompanied by articles).
- Capitalize trademarked brand names such as Coca-Cola©, Nike©, Apple©, and Skittles©.
- Don’t capitalize the nouns referring to what kind of products these are like a soda pop, a pair of tennis shoes, a computer, or candy.

Exercises (Answers Below):
Underline the words in the following sentence that need to be capitalized:

1) The girl named janice told me about her wonderful trip to puerto rico, where she had driven a mazda along the beach and gone diving.

Make sure to capitalize the first word at the beginning of each sentence, even if it is a common noun, verb, pronoun, or any other part of speech that is not usually capitalized:

- How are you doing today?
- Once upon a time, a princess lived in a mighty castle.
- We will hang out another time.

Capitalize the person pronoun “I,” no matter where it is in the sentence:

- I am going to the park.
- That was the first time she and I went out on a date.
- How did you know I was sick?

Circle the words in the following sentence that need to be capitalized:

2) around two o’clock therese and jean realized that they had missed their delta flight to tokyo, where i was waiting to pick them up once their plane had landed.
1) Answers: Janice (personal name), Puerto Rico (specific place), and Mazda (brand name for a specific type of convertible).

2) Answers: Around (beginning of sentence), Therese and Jean (personal names), Delta (brand name for specific airplane company), Tokyo (specific place), and I (personal pronoun “I”).

**Resources:**

- “Capitalization,” (Capital Community College Foundation”
- “Capitalization Rules,” (Townson University Online Writing Support)

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