

Capitalizing Religions and Religious Holidays

Understanding religious capitalization rules can be difficult so we're here to help. Below we'll break down the rules for the names of religions, holy books, and people who practice a religion.

Do you capitalize religions?

Yes. When referring to religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, etc. you should always capitalize the word since religions are proper nouns. Even when referring to specific sects of a religion such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodox Judaism, and Sunni Islam, you capitalize the names since they are adjectives that refer to the proper noun of the religion.

Do you capitalize holy texts?

You always capitalize the titles of religious texts such as the Holy Bible, the Torah, and the Quran because these are all proper nouns. However, bible can also be used as a regular noun so you can refer to a "fisherman's bible" in lowercase for example. In general, if you are referring to a specific religious book, you should capitalize it.

One word you don't capitalize is biblical. Even though it is an adjective that describes a proper noun, it has lost its capitalization over the years. This is because when it is used, it generally isn't referring the Bible itself. Instead, phrases such as "biblical proportions" refer to a grandness that has a likeness to the Bible, but is no longer exclusive to the holy text.

Do you capitalize the name of people who practice a religion?

Whenever you refer to someone who practices a religion or religious sect since they too are proper nouns or adjectives that describe a proper noun. For example, you should capitalize the following people: Catholic, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, or Protestant.

Do you capitalize religious holidays?

Yes, you should always capitalize religious holidays since they are proper nouns. When referring to holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, Yom Kippur, Ramadan, or Eid Al-Fitr, you should capitalize the entire word. If you include the word "day" at the end, you should capitalize both the holiday name and "day" since "day" is part of the holiday name in this case.

Should Pastor Be Capitalized?

Pastor is a religious title, and like the pope, the bishop, and similar religious titles, it has its very own rules. But the question still is worth asking, is pastor capitalized?

As with any other word, if the word pastor is at the beginning of a sentence it has to be capitalized.

Likewise, if the word pastor is used as an honorific before the full name of the person, it should be capitalized. This is especially the case if this is the first mention of the person. Always put the word pastor before a person's full name when you are mentioning him or her for the first time.

For example:

- "Sarah went to see Pastor Tim."
- "She has read what Pastor Tim wrote in his diary."
- "Pastor Tim and his wife Debra are expecting twins, a boy, and a girl."

- “The leader of our community, the much-beloved Pastor Eric Matthews, went missing in Africa earlier this week.”
- “Pastor is a calling in life, not a job.”

When is the Word Pastor Not Capitalized?

In every other instance, the word pastor should be written in lowercase. This means that the word pastor should be written in lowercase if it finds itself in every place of a grammatical structure that is not the beginning of a sentence or before the name of the person who carries the word pastor as an honorific or religious title.

For example:

- “Sarah’s church is run by a very popular pastor named Tim.”
- “Her pastor likes to keep a diary”
- “I am so clumsy, I called our pastor bishop the other day.”
- “She told me that your pastor does a lot of charity work.”
- “The woman said that the FBI went and questioned our pastor for some reason.”
- “Stan Beeman thought about being a pastor, but the quit life never really suited him.”

Should Bible Be Capitalized?

When is bible capitalized in a sentence? Sometimes it is capitalized and sometimes not so we explore the reasons for when the word “bible” is capitalized below.

When is the word “bible” capitalized?

When referring to the Christian book itself, the word Bible should always be capitalized.

For example,

- “The story of Abraham is told in the Bible.”

- The word Bible is also capitalized when referring to the Jewish Bible, when used as the first word in a sentence, and when used in the main title of written works.

You always capitalize Bible when referring to a proper noun including the various versions of both the Christian and Jewish Bibles.

For example:

- "King James Bible", "Gideon's Bible" or "Hebrews Bible."
- "The Holy Bible" is a proper title of a book and the word bible in this case must always be capitalized.

You will find that at times, especially when you are likening other books to the Bible, you do not capitalize the word bible.

For example, "Gordon Ramsey's cookbook is a chefs' bible. Additionally, the adjective biblical is an exception of capitalization even though it refers to the proper noun of "Bible".

Is Church Capitalized?

Figuring out how whether or not the word church should be capitalized can sometimes be tricky. And in some circles, failing to follow the rules of capitalization is practically a sin. So how can you know when to capitalize church and when not to? It's actually pretty easy if you follow these simple rules.

Church should be capitalized when it is the first word in the sentence as it is here. The word "church" should also be capitalized if you are mentioning the denomination of a specific church or using its proper name. For example, "Pope Francis is the current Pope of the Roman Catholic Church" or "He is a member of a Baptist Church."

You don't need to capitalize the word church if you are speaking about church in a general way. For example, "Sally goes to church every Sunday". In this case, the word church is written in lowercase because it is not a proper noun.

Is Catholic Capitalized?

When would you lowercase Catholic?

When it first entered the English language in the 16th century, catholic meant "common" or "general" so the religion was naturally the "common" religion. When the Western Church split from the rest of the church after the Reformation, it began referring to itself as the Catholic Church, but the word catholic still meant "general" or "common" when used by itself.

What about Catholicism?

Since Catholicism is a noun referring to the Catholic religion, it is capitalized as well.