How to Capitalize Titles in MLA Style

These titles should appear in a research paper as follows:

- Modernism and Negritude
- Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur
- Turner's Early Sketchbooks

The rules for capitalizing titles are strict. In a title or a subtitle, capitalize the first word, the last word, and all principal words, including those that follow hyphens in compound terms. Therefore, capitalize the following parts of speech:

- Nouns (e.g., *flowers* and *Europe*, as in *The Flowers of Europe*)
- Pronouns (e.g., *our*, as in *Save Our Children*; *that*, as in *The Mouse That Roared*)
- Verbs (e.g., *watches*, as in *America Watches Television: is*, as in *What Is Literature?*)
- Adjectives (e.g., *ugly*, as in *The Ugly Duckling: that*, as in *Who Said That Phrase?*)
- Adverbs (e.g., *slightly*, as in *Only Slightly Corrupt: down*, as in *Go Down, Moses*)
- Subordinating conjunctions (e.g., *after, although, as if, as soon as, because, before, if, that, unless, until, when, where, while*, as in *One If by Land* and *Anywhere That Chance Leads*)

Do not capitalize the following parts of speech when they fall in the middle of a title:

- Articles (a. an. the, as in *Under the Bamboo Tree*)
- Prepositions (e.g., *against, between, in, of, to*, as in *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Dialogue between the Soul and Body*)
- Coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*, as in *Romeo and Juliet*)
- The *to* in infinitives (as in *How to Play Chess*)

Use a colon and a space to separate a title from a subtitle, unless the title ends in a question mark, an exclamation point, or a dash. Include other punctuation only if it is part of the title.

The following examples illustrate how to capitalize and punctuate a variety of titles.

- Death of a Salesman
- The Teaching of Spanish in English-Speaking Countries
- Storytelling and Mythmaking: Images from Film and Literature
- Life As I Find It
- The Artist as Critic
- What Are You Doing in My Universe?
- Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Language
- The Importance of Being Earnest
- It's a Wonderful Life

• In MLA format, **all** titles capitalize the following:

1. **The first word** of the title [and of the subtitle if one is included]
   - *The Future Fair: A Fair for Everybody*
   - *America Eats Its Young: Eavedropping on the Life and Strange Times of George Clinton*

2. All **nouns** and **pronouns**
   - *The Future Fair: A Fair for Everybody*
   - *Our Man in Havana*
   - *The Way We Were*

3. All **verbs**
   - *America Eats Its Young: Eavedropping on the Life and Strange Times of George Clinton*
   - *The Way We Were*
   - *Understanding Media*

4. All **adjectives** and **adverbs**
   - *The Future Fair: A Fair for Everybody*
   - *The Very Quiet Caterpillar*
   - *I've Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down to Me*

5. All **subordinating conjunctions** — for example, *after, although, as if, as soon as, because, before, [etc.]* as in
   - *Look As If You're Busy: The Psychology of the Modern Workplace*
   - *To Sleep Until the Day Breaks: The Life of the Single Parent*

6. In contrast, **do not capitalize** any of the following [unless the first word of a title or subtitle]
   1. **Articles** [a, an, the]
      - *Look As If You're Busy: The Psychology of the Modern Workplace*
      - *To Build a Fire*
      - *When You Meet an Aardvark: The Riddles of Working Class Pretoria*
   2. **Prepositions** — for example, *by, for, on, to, [etc.]* as in
      - *The Future Fair: A Fair for Everybody*
      - *Our Man in Havana*
      - *America Eats Its Young: Eavedropping on the Life and Strange Times of George Clinton*
      - *When We Went down to the Water: A Short History of Early American Coast Guard Units*
   3. **Coordinating conjunctions** [and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet] as in
      - *Young and Angry: The Rise of Punk Culture*
      - *Neither Fish nor Fowl: The Taxonomy of Australian Marsupials*
   4. The word *to* when used as part of an infinitive verb phrase [to run, to find, to investigate]
      - *Mister, Want to Buy a Bunny?: The Life and Fast Times of Spike Jones and His Orchestra*
      - *Kierkegaard or Seven Ways to Understand Modern Existentialism*

• If in doubt as to what part of speech (noun, verb, etc.) a given word actually is, consult a standard English dictionary or handbook of grammar.

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