

Mechanics Review

When mechanics of good writing are referred to, this topic generally means the basic use of capitalization, abbreviations and numbers. In order for your writing to be correctly interpreted, it is important to understand the principles behind using capital letters, common abbreviations and numbers.

Capitalization:

Nouns that refer to a specific person, place, event or thing need to be capitalized. You should not capitalize common nouns, since they refer only to a general type of person, place or thing.

Common nouns:

holiday
president
day of the week
college
country
a parent
a teacher

Proper Nouns:

Christmas
President Washington
Saturday
Blue River Community College
United States of America
Dad
Instructor Jones

Capitalize the names of organizations, institutions and trademarks.

My aunt is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.
My father belongs to the Democratic party.
He bought a Pontiac Grand Prix.

In titles (books, chapter titles, songs, plays, poems, television programs, movies, and so forth) capitalize all words *except* (a, an, the) connecting words (a, but, or for, nor, so) and prepositions (of, at, in, with, for) unless they are the first or last word of the title).

The Kansas City Star
A Tale of Two Cities

Legend of the Unicorn
Gone with the Wind

Mechanics Review/2

Abbreviations:

An abbreviation is a shortened form of a phrase or word.

Mr. Samuel Jones (Mister)

Dr. Mary Stuart (Doctor)

GM (General Motors)

FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation)

NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome)

The first time you name a company, organization, society or special term, spell out the name and identify the abbreviation in parentheses. You may then use the abbreviation in later references.

He works for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). His work for the CIA has spanned many decades.

Numbers:

Spell out numbers of one or two words or those that begin a sentence. Use figures for numbers that require more than two words to spell out. *

They wanted to bring eighty-four folders for the project.

There were 150 people who volunteered to help with the cleaning the neighborhood.

Sixty-four animals were adopted.

Generally, figures are acceptable for dates, addresses, percentages, fractions, decimals, scores, statistics and other numerical results, exact amounts of money, divisions of books and plays, pages, identification numbers, and the time.*

Dates: July 4, 1776, 56 BC, AD 30

Addresses: 776 Sunset Lane, 524 West 43rd Street

Percentages : My car loan was approved at 10 percent.

Fractions, Decimals: $\frac{1}{2}$, 0.057

Scores: 7 to 3, 21-18

Statistics average age 35, average weight 170

Surveys 3 out of 5.

Exact amounts of money: \$305.95, \$107.00

Divisions of Books: volume 2, chapter 5, page 149

Divisions of Plays Act 4, Scene 3 (or act IV, scene iii)

Identification Numbers: serial number 103347895

Times: The bus plans to leave at 9:00 a.m. and return to the school at 5:50 p.m.

***Source:** *Rules For Writers*, 6th edition, 2008.