

Political Capitalization

President

Capitalize when used as a title preceding a name.

- Example: President Obama is traveling to India this week.

Capitalize when referring to a specific president even without using the name.

- Example: What do you think of the President's healthcare plan?

Use lowercase when referring generally to the office.

- Example: The Constitution says the president must be a natural born citizen of the United States.

Administration

Similar to the president rule, capitalize when referring to a specific administration, whether you name it explicitly or not.

- Example: Interior Secretary James Watt was a member of the Reagan Administration.
- Example: Environmentalists criticized the Administration for appointing Watt.

Use lowercase when referring generally to an administration.

- Example: The requirements of an act are implemented by the administration in power.

Congress

ALWAYS capitalize when referring to the US Senate and House of Representatives.

- Example: The mid-term elections dramatically altered the composition of Congress.

Use lowercase when 'congressional' is used as an adjective.

- Example: That hearing is an abuse of congressional powers!

UNLESS the usage is part of a proper name

- Example: The Congressional Review Act gives Congress the power to review all new federal regulations issued by government agencies.

Congressional Titles (representative/senator/congressman)

Capitalize when using the term as a title followed by a name.

- Example: Last week, Senator Reid defeated Sharron Angle in the 2010 mid-term elections.

Otherwise, use lowercase.

- Example: The senator from California supported the climate change bill.
- Example: Contrary to the President's wishes, the senator voted against the bill.

Political Parties

Capitalize when referring to a political party or member of a political party; also capitalize the word "party" if used.

- Example: Barbara Boxer is a running for re-election as a Democrat.
- Example: The Natural Resources Defense Council's position is similar to the Democratic Party platform on this issue.

Use lowercase for a general political philosophy or principles.

- Example: He is democratic in his thinking.

A clever example from [WikiAnswers](#) sums it up as follows:

A Democrat is someone who belongs to the Democratic Party; a democrat is someone who believes in democracy. Democrats (big D) are democrats, but not all democrats (small D) are Democrats—some of them are Republicans!

Agencies

ALWAYS capitalize when referring to a specific agency, whether it is explicitly named or not.

- Example: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) implemented the civilian space program.
- Example: The Agency also conducts aeronautics and aerospace research.

Use lowercase if referring to agencies in general.

- Example: Generally, policy implementation is an agency responsibility.

Directions/Parts of the Country

Capitalize when referring to a place name.

- Example: Heidi is from West Virginia.

Use lowercase when talking about a general direction.

- Example: To find the bike locker, head towards the north side of Bren Hall.

Where this can get tricky is when parts of a country are referred to by a direction, *e.g.*, the Southwest. In this case, if the term refers to a *specific* geographic area as an entity, you should capitalize it. In contrast, if you are just using the term to describe a portion of the country that lies in a westerly (or other) direction, use lowercase.

- Example: Buffalo used to roam freely across the Great Plains of the American West. vs. Buffalo used to roam freely across large parts of the western United States.
- Example: Representatives from western states are generally opposed to an increase in grazing fees on federal lands.
- Example: The Northeast is known for its vibrant display of fall foliage.