


# How to Know when to Capitalize Job Titles

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Co-authored by Katherine Kirkinis, Ed.M., MA  and 10 contributors

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The rules of grammar are always tricky to master, especially since there are so many of them, and they all seem to come with plenty of exceptions. Like the rest of English grammar, the rules for capitalizing job titles can often be confusing. However, most of the time, there's no call for uppercase. If you take a little time to learn the few cases in which capitalization applies, you can be confident that you can write any job title correctly.

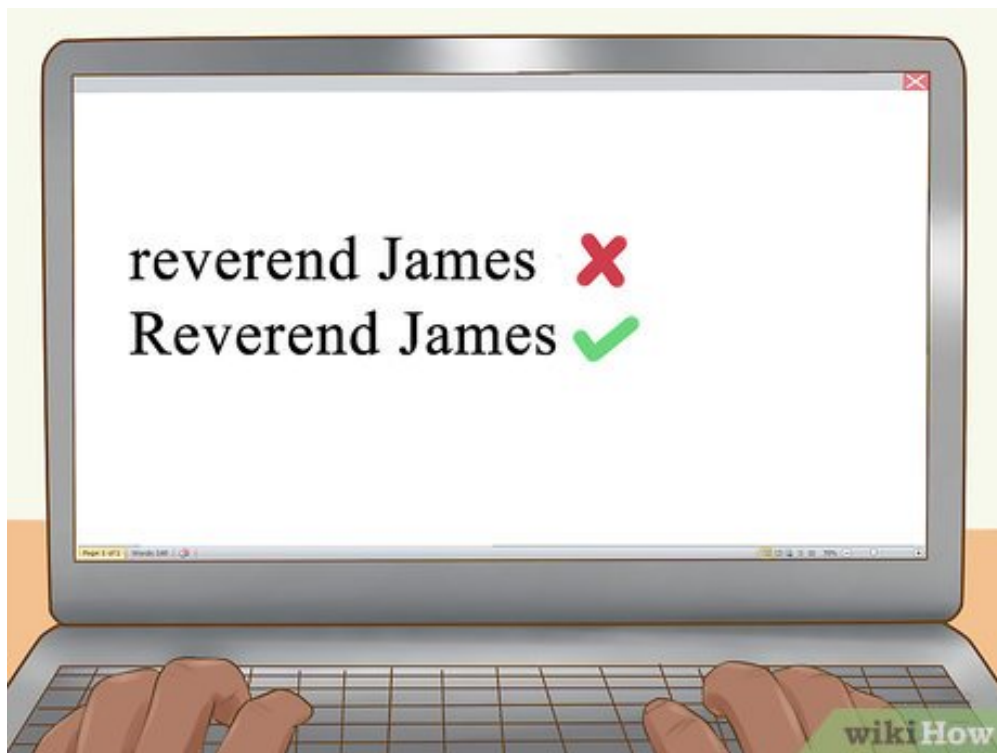
## Method 1

### Method 1 of 3: Understanding Which Job Titles to Capitalize



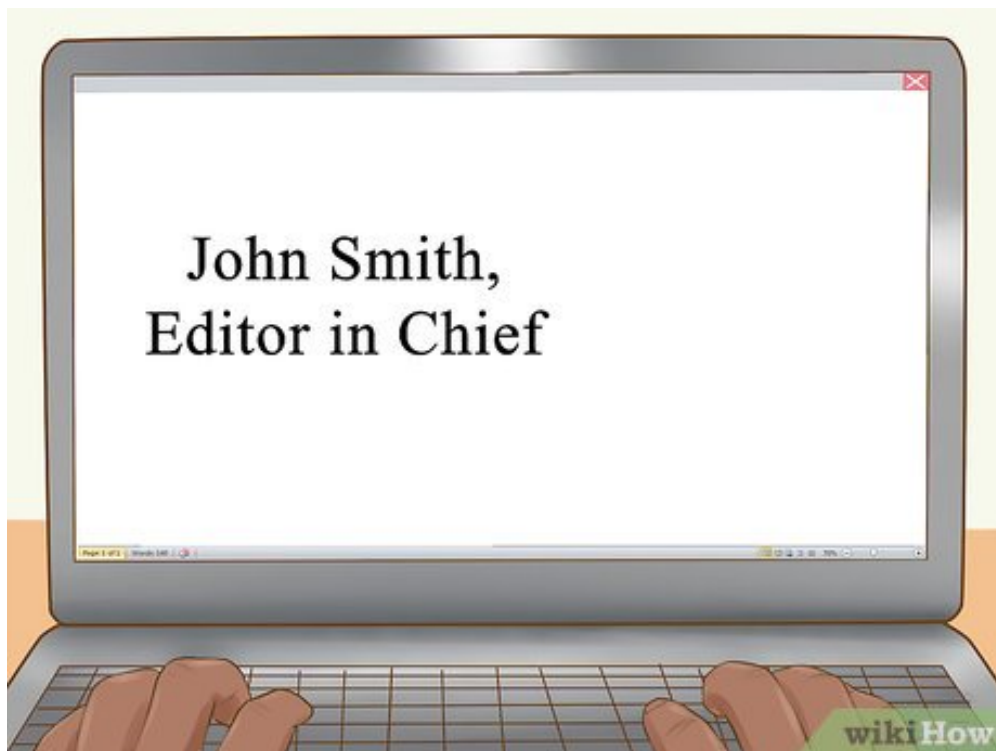
**1 Capitalize proper nouns.** <sup>[1]</sup> This is the most general rule of capitalization. It means that you should use uppercase for the unique names of specific entities (like "Paris," "Saturn," "Alex," or "Green Peace") but lowercase for "common nouns" that refer to a class of entities (like "city," "planet," "baseball player," or "environmental organization"). In the case of job titles, this means that most job titles are not capitalized.<sup>[2]</sup>

- However, a title that refers to an official, one-of-a-kind position, like the "Queen of England," should be capitalized.

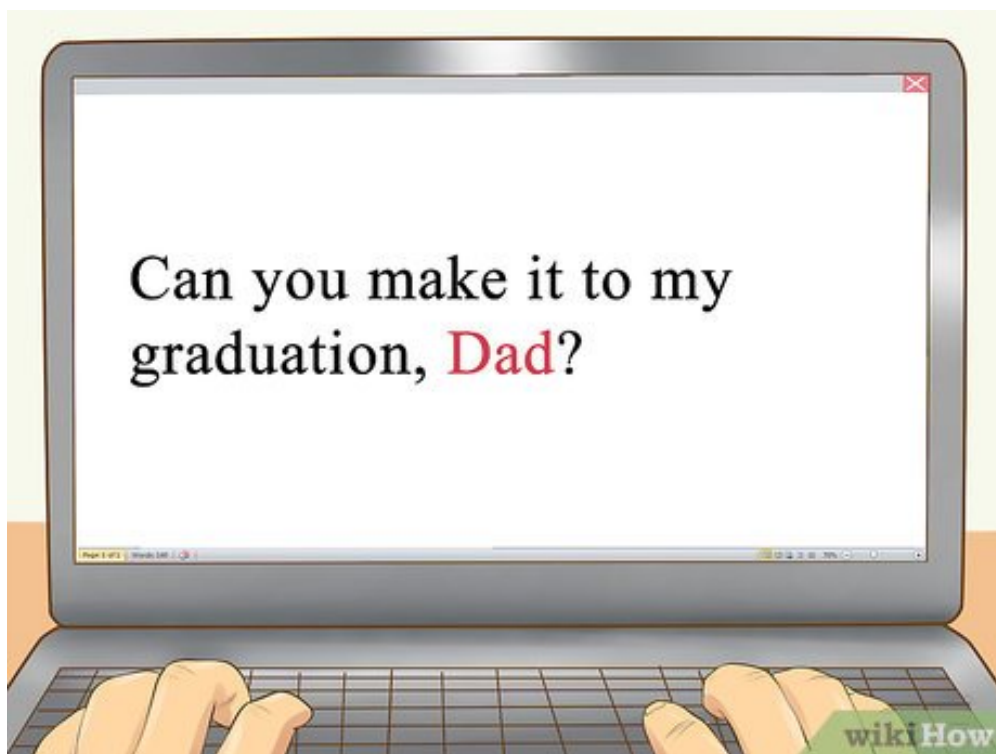


**2 Capitalize job titles that precede someone's name.** If a specific title comes immediately before a name and refers to a specific person, it's usually part of a proper noun, and therefore usually should be capitalized. That is, "reverend James" should be "Reverend James," and "doctor Smith" should be "Doctor Smith" or "Dr. Smith."<sup>[3]</sup>

- Note that this rule only holds true for titles that have been officially conferred or awarded. For instance, you would capitalize, "Professor Anita Brown," "Judge Regina Blake," and "President Flora Barnum," but you would not capitalize titles like "artist," "race car driver," or "musician," as in, "This song is performed by musician Louis Armstrong."
- Another way to determine if a job immediately preceding a person's name should be capitalized is to consider if it's a title or a description. That is, "Director of Marketing Joanna Russell" is correct if that's Joanna's official title. If you're only describing her position, you wouldn't capitalize her job: "marketing chief Joanna Russell."<sup>[4]</sup>

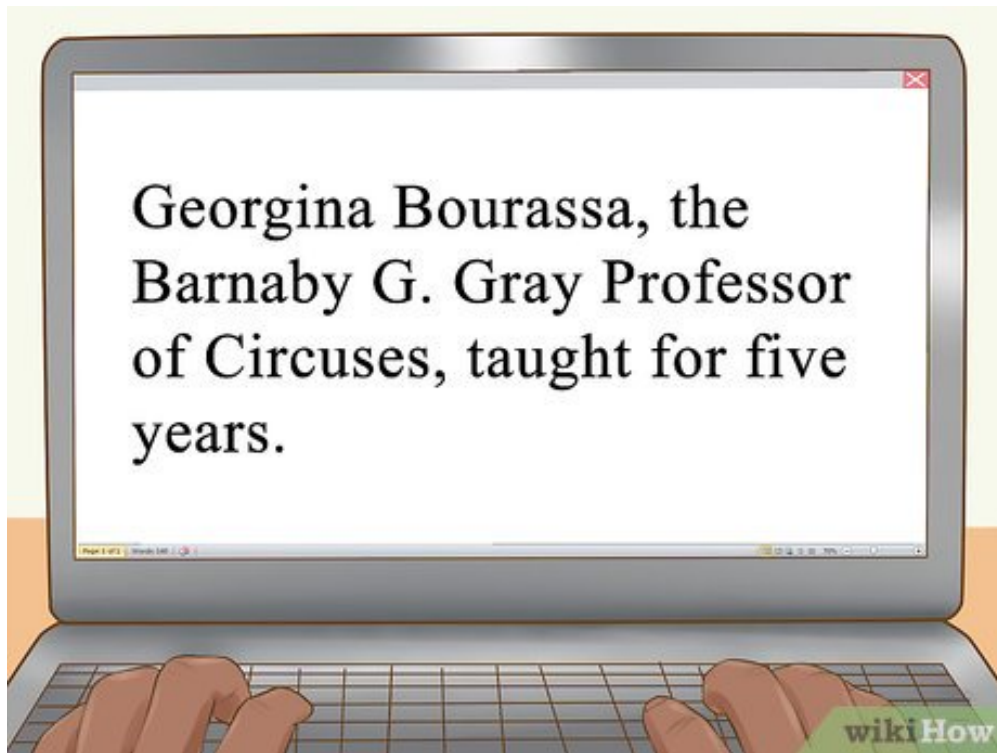


**3 Capitalize job titles when signing your name.** At the end of a letter, email, or other messages, your job title should be capitalized. Instead of signing off as “John Smith, editor in chief,” your signature line should read “John Smith, Editor in Chief.”<sup>[5]</sup>



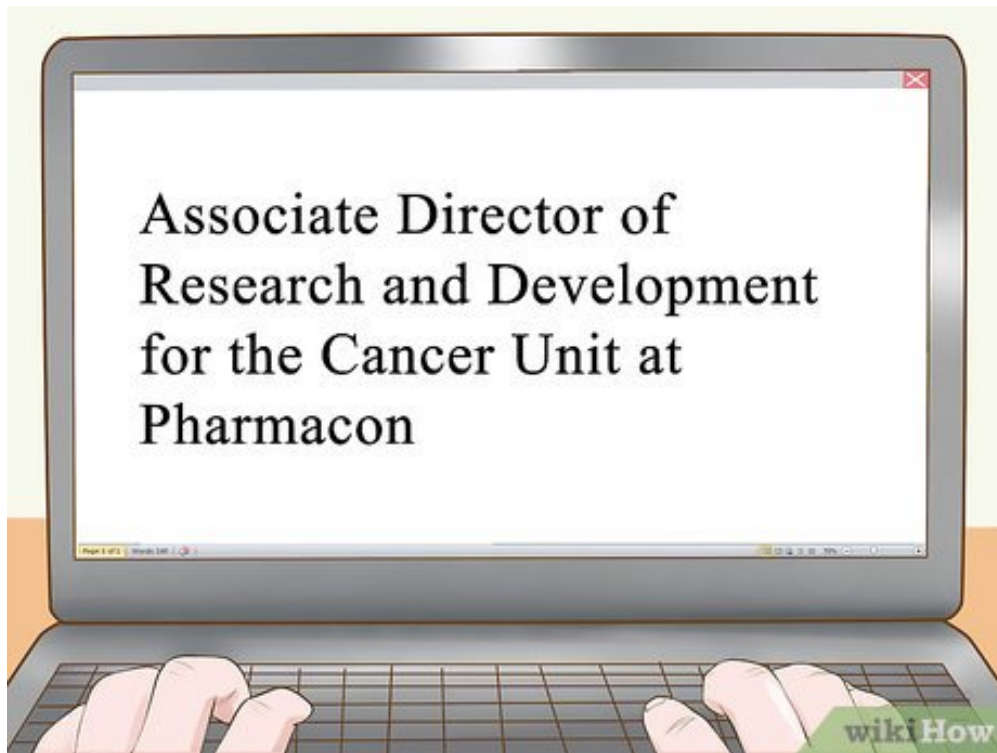
**4 Capitalize titles when they’re used in lieu of a name.** If you are using a person’s title as a replacement for their name, especially when directly addressing them, you should capitalize it.<sup>[6]</sup>

- For example: “Can you make it to my graduation, Dad?” or “With all due respect, General, I disagree,” or “I saw the Queen of England ride by today.”
- This rule also holds true for terms of respect, like “Your Honor” or “Your Highness”.



**5 Use uppercase with endowed positions.** Some titles of jobs like endowed professorships or fellowships are proper nouns because they are one-of-a-kind. Because the job titles in this case are proper nouns, be sure to capitalize them even when they're written after a person's name.

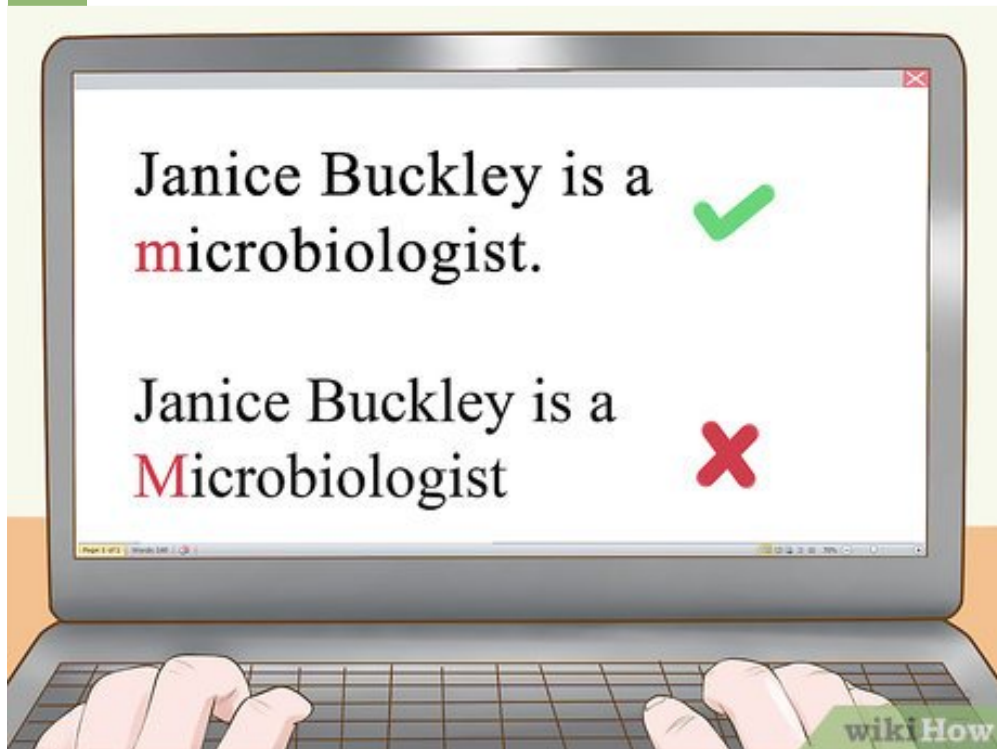
- For instance, "Georgina Bourassa, the Barnaby G. Gray Professor of Circuses, taught for five years."



**6 Remember to use title case when capitalizing.** That is, always capitalize the first, last, and principal words in a title, but don't capitalize unimportant words like prepositions (such as, "of," "about," or "with"), conjunctions (such as, "and," "but," or "or"), or articles ("a," "an," or "the").<sup>[7]</sup>

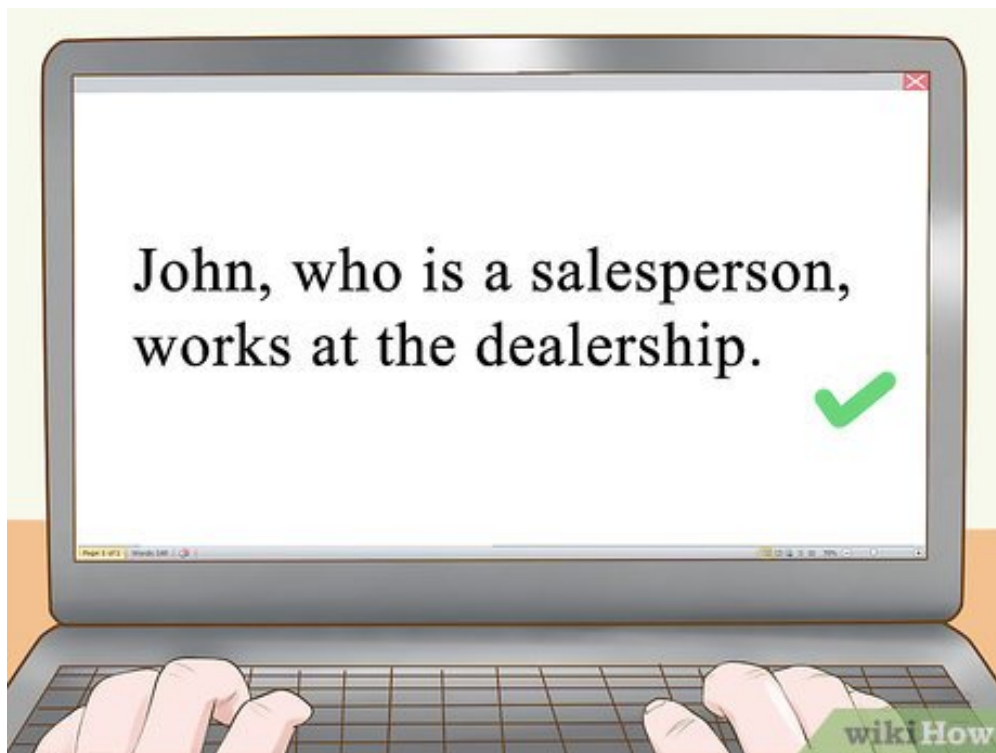
- For example, "associate director of research and development for the cancer unit at Pharmacon" should be: "Associate Director of Research and Development for the Cancer Unit at Pharmacon."
- Networks (like ESPN) and journalism outlets (such as CNN) are great resources for determining which words should or should not be capitalized in a title.

## Method 2 of 3: Knowing When to Keep Titles in Lowercase



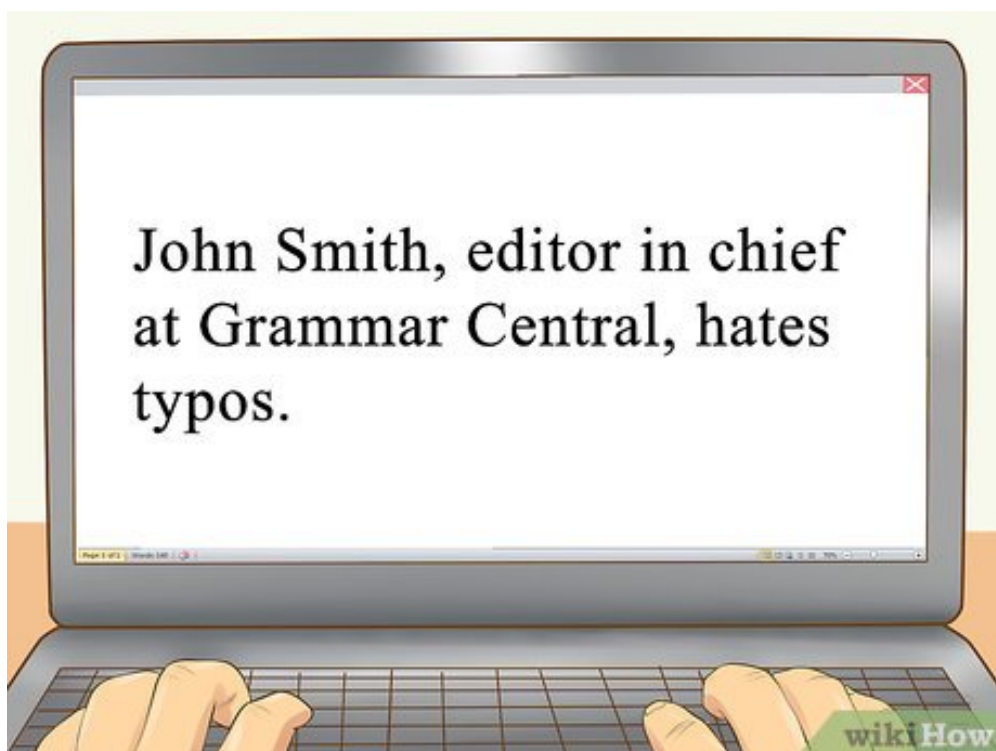
**1 Don't capitalize unofficial titles or common nouns.** When the job title refers to a profession or class of jobs rather than to a specific or official title, do not put it in uppercase.<sup>[8]</sup>

- For instance, "Janice Buckley is a microbiologist," or "Here are some tips from painter John Green." In both cases, these job titles are being used to describe a profession rather than an official title, so they shouldn't be capitalized.



**2 Do not capitalize a title that's on its own.** If a title is isolated from any names and used as a standalone noun in a sentence, it should not be capitalized.<sup>[9]</sup> This is the most common use-case for job titles, which means that they most often don't require uppercase.<sup>[10]</sup>

- For example, "John, who is a salesperson, works at the dealership," or "The clerk helped us with the documents."

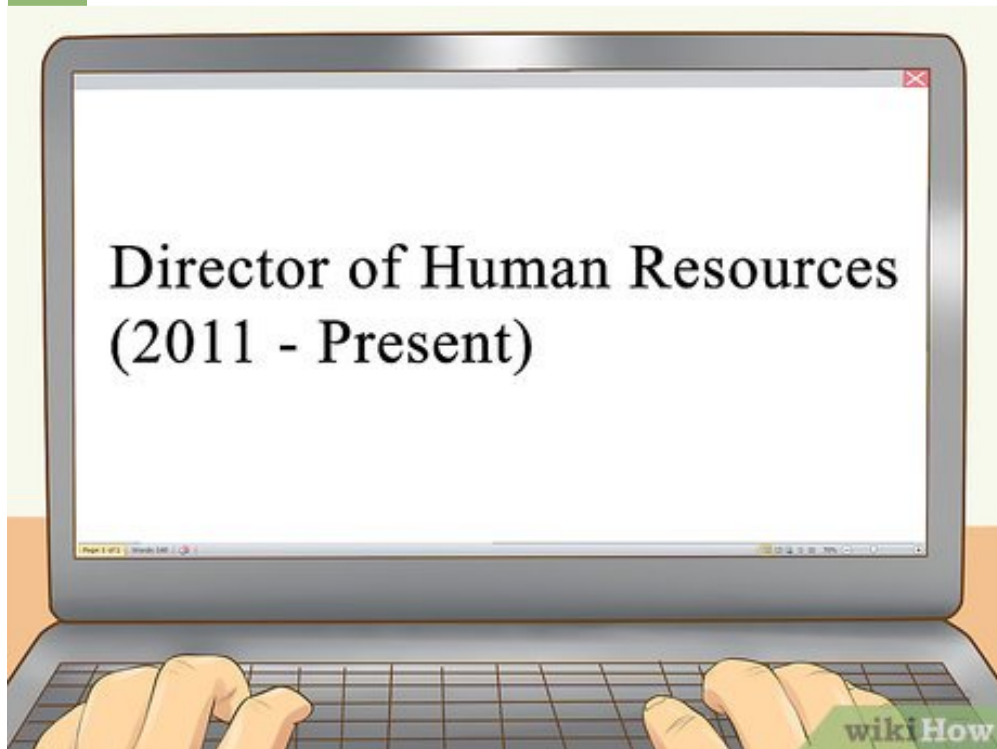


**3 Use lowercase when the title comes after a person's name in a sentence.** This is true whether or not the title is specific or general, official or unofficial.<sup>[11]</sup>

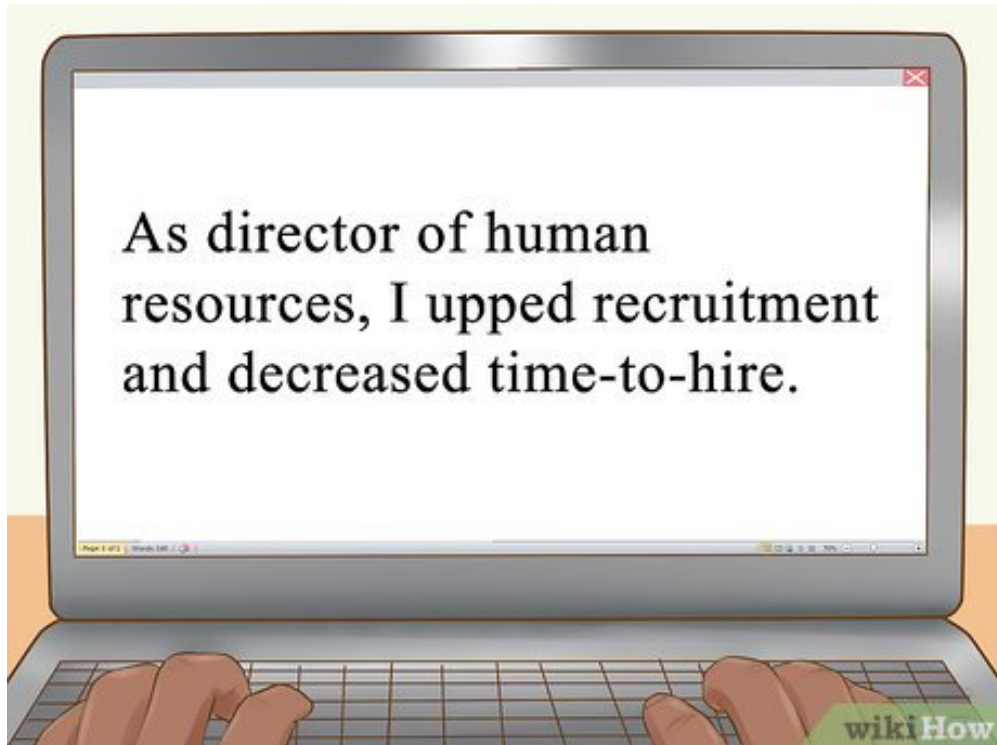
- For example: "Jesse Roberts, editor in chief at Grammar Central, hates typos," or "Helena Briggs, social worker with the NHS, is handling the case."



### Method 3 of 3: Capitalizing Titles in Job Application Materials

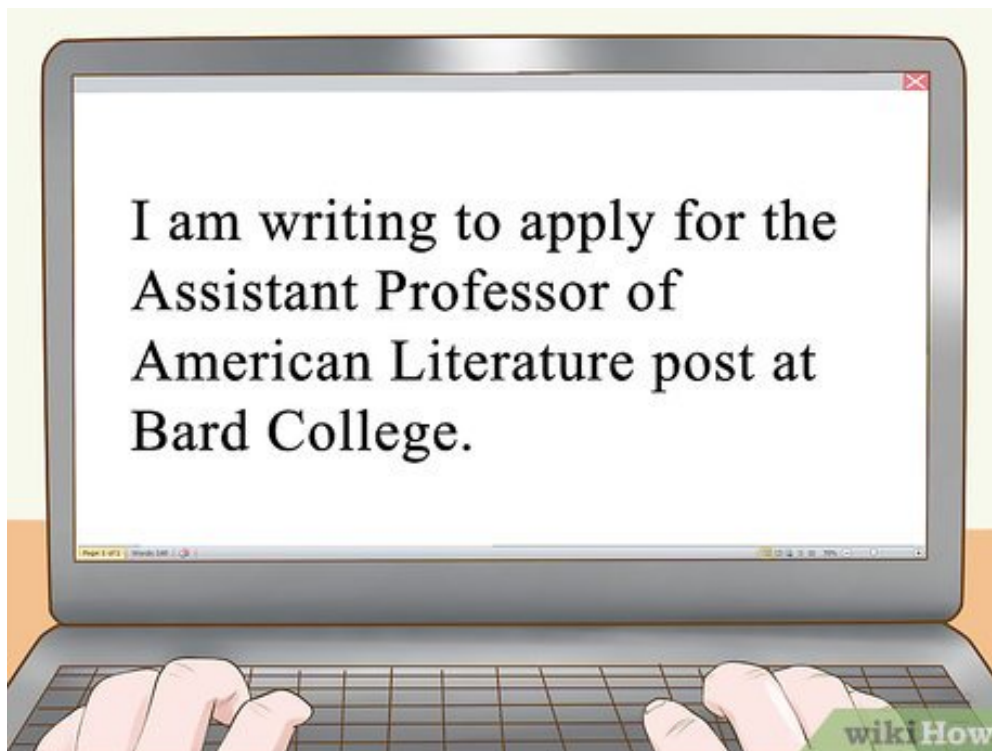


**1 Capitalize job titles when they serve as headings in your resume.** <sup>[12]</sup> When you are introducing an official position that you have held in the experience section of your resume, you should capitalize it. For instance: "Director of Human Resources (2011 - Present)".<sup>[13]</sup>



**2 Do not capitalize job titles in the body text of your resume.** <sup>[14]</sup> If a job title appears as part of a sentence or paragraph of your resume, for instance, in the summary or in a job description, do not use uppercase. For example: "As director of human resources, I upped recruitment and decreased time-to-hire."<sup>[15]</sup>





**3 Be consistent with your capitalization of official job titles in cover letters.** There's no consensus about whether you definitely should or should not capitalize specific, official job titles when they appear in your cover letter. The important thing is to decide which way to go and be consistent throughout the text.<sup>[16]</sup>

- When you are applying for a specific position, many people are inclined to put that job title in uppercase in their cover letters: "I am writing to apply for the Assistant Professor of American Literature post at Bard College." If you do, be sure that you capitalize the other specific job titles included in your letter.
- The best way to help you decide which way to go is to look at the company's job listing and website to see if they capitalize specific job titles that appear within sentences or not. If they do, then you should, too.
- Either way, remember that you should never capitalize general job titles in a sentence, such as, "I have more than twenty years of experiences as a director of human resources," or "I am looking for a position as a campaign manager in the nonprofit sector."



## Expert Q&A

### Question

Should I capitalize a job title in a cover letter?



**Katherine Kirkinis, Ed.M., MA**

Career Coach &  
Psychotherapist  
Expert Answer

In most cases, you don't need to capitalize the job title in your cover letter.

Helpful 0 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

In a policy or process document, my understanding is that you should capitalize a title if the title is used to refer to a specific person/entity in lieu of using their name and title. Does this apply?



Donagan  
Top Answerer

That's a good rule to follow.

Helpful 7 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

Do I capitalize general surgeon, podiatrist and family practice in a resume?



Community Answer

If you are using these titles in headings (for instance, when you list your professional experience), they should be capitalized. When using them anywhere else in the body text of the resume, they should not be capitalized. See Method 3 for more information.

Helpful 4 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

I am writing a presentation and refer to several positions in a dealership (for example, dealer principal, sales manager, service manager, etc.). Should these be capitalized?



Community Answer

You shouldn't capitalize them if the titles are in a sentence. But if they are in a column (for example) it is better to capitalize them.

Helpful 5 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

Do I capitalize "Attendance Counselor Position" in a sentence, or is it "Attendance Counselor position"?



Community Answer

In a sentence, it should be "attendance counselor position." All three words should be lowercase.

Helpful 3 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

I am writing in response to the claims adjuster regarding 1 job posting on the company website. What should I say?



Community Answer

When you respond to a specific job posting, follow the precedent set by the company when it comes to the capitalization of job titles. If their job description and website capitalize specific job titles when they appear in a sentence, you should, too: "Hello, I am writing to apply for the Claims Adjuster post advertised on Company X's website." If they don't, you should not: "Hello, I am submitting an application for the claims adjuster position recently advertised on your website."

Helpful 1 Not Helpful 1

#### Question

**Do I capitalize titles if they reference just one person? Example: A lieutenant, selected by the Community and Special Services Division Assistant Chief. Is assistant chief capitalized?**



**Donagan**  
Top Answerer

Yes, when referring to a specific person or job position. For example, you might say "an assistant chief" but "the Assistant Chief."

Helpful 3 Not Helpful 2

#### Question

**Is it correct to write "Residential Architect John Smith favors contemporary design," or should it be "Residential architect John Smith favors contemporary design"?**



Community Answer

I would think this would be un-capitalized (residential architect), an unofficial title as noted above.

Helpful 1 Not Helpful 1

#### Question

**Should I say Eureka High School teacher Joe Smith or Eureka High School Teacher Joe Smith?**



**Donagan**  
Top Answerer

There's no need to capitalize "teacher." It is not a conferred title, it is a job description.

Helpful 0 Not Helpful 0

#### Question

**Is King of Rock & Roll capitalized?**



**Donagan**  
Top Answerer

Yes, because it is a very specialized title and mainly refers to one specific person.

Helpful 1 Not Helpful 0

[See more answers](#)



### Tips

- When in doubt, don't capitalize titles. It's usually not needed, and most style guidelines lean toward capitalizing less.



### Warnings

- The conventions for capitalization may change depending on your geographic location or even your industry. For instance, there are differences between the U.S. and U.K. as well as between biologists and journalists. Be sure that you're aware of which conventions to go by when you're writing something for a specific audience.

- If you're writing something for work, check to see if there is a company or organizational style guide that you can use as a reference to look up their preferences as to capitalization.

## References

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16. ↑ Katherine Kirkinis, Ed.M., MA. Career Coach & Psychotherapist. Expert Interview. 14 October 2020.

## About This Article



Co-authored by:  
**Katherine Kirkinis, Ed.M., MA**  
 Career Coach & Psychotherapist

This article was co-authored by **Katherine Kirkinis, Ed.M., MA**. Katherine Kirkinis is a Career Coach and Psychotherapist who has served as a career expert for Forbes, Medium, Best Life, and Working Mother Magazine, and as a diversity and inclusion expert for ATTN and Quartz. She specializes in working with issues of career, identity, and indecision. She has doctoral-level training in career counseling and career assessment and has worked with hundreds of clients to make career decisions through career assessments. She is pursuing a doctoral degree at The University of Albany, SUNY where her work focuses on diversity and inclusion, racism in the workplace, and racial identity. She is a published author and has been featured in academic journals as well as popular media outlets. Her research has been presented at 10+ national APA conferences since 2013. This article has been viewed 174,086 times.

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