

English grammar

Proper nouns

Grammar rules with examples

Proper nouns are the names of particular people, animals, organizations, places and other things. Unlike common nouns they always begin with capital letters.

Compare (common/proper noun):

teacher/Mrs. Clark, gallery/the National Gallery, mountain/Mount Everest, month/January

There are many types of proper nouns that begin with a capital letter. Some of them are used with the definite article *the*, others are used without *the*.

Proper nouns with *the*:

The definite article (*the*) is used before:

Plural names of people: *the Collins* (= *the Collin family*)

Plural names of countries and country names that include common names: *the Netherlands, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic*

Nations (*the* + adjective): *the Spanish, the Polish, the British*

Seas and rivers: *the Adriatic, the Atlantic Ocean, the Thames, the Mississippi River*

Groups of islands and chains of mountains: *the Azores, the Bahamas, the British Isles, the Alps, the Andes, the Himalayas*

Deserts and regions: *the Sahara, the Gobi Desert, the Riviera, the Crimea*

Most organizations: *the Bush Administration, the Rotary Club, the Ford Foundation, the Supreme Court, the Senate* (but *Congress*)

Newspapers: *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian, The Daily Mirror* (but *USA Today*)

Historical and cultural periods: *the Bronze Age, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance*

Most names made with 'of': *the London School of Economics, the Statue of Liberty, the Tower of London, the Bank of New York* (but *Bank of America*)

Most names consisting of adjective + common noun: *the National Gallery, the British Museum, the North Pole, the West End, the High Street, the Republican Party* (but *North America, West Germany* = an adjective + proper name)

Some other names: *the City, the Mall, the Bronx*

Proper nouns without *the*:

The definite article (*the*) is not used before:

Names and titles of people: *William, Angelina Jolie, President Kennedy, Captain Cook, Detective Poirot, Doctor Watson*

Names of animals: *Simba, Spot, Fluffy*

Languages, nationalities or ethnic groups: *Spanish, Polish, Hindi, Han Chinese*

Countries consisting of a singular proper name and continents: *Spain, Vietnam, Britain, Ghana, India, Asia, Australia, Europe*

Streets, squares, towns, cities: *Broadway, Oxford Street, Times Square, Trafalgar Square, Dover, New York* (but *the Cathedral Square, the Hague*)

Lakes and ponds: *Lake Victoria, Lake Superior, Great Pond*

Islands and mountain peaks: *Borneo, New Guinea, Madagascar, Mont Blanc, Mount Everest, Aconcagua, Mount Kenya*

Parks and amusement parks: *Central Park, Hyde Park, Disneyland, Europa Park, Everland*

Most magazines: *Newsweek, Vogue, National Geographic, PC World, Better Homes and Gardens* (but *The New Yorker, The Economist*)

Brands: *Jack Daniel's, Kit Kat, Coca - Cola, Mercedes - Benz, Panasonic*

Days, months and holidays: *Monday, July, New Year's Eve, Halloween, Labour Day, Thanksgiving*
Religious names: *Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism*
Most places named after a person or a town: *Mario's Pizzeria, McDonald's, St Peter's Cathedral, Vaclav Havel Airport, Edinburgh Castle, Carnegie Hall, Rockefeller Center* (but *the Royal Albert Hall, the John Hancock Center, the Sears Tower*)

Proper nouns with *the* or without *the*

There are, however, many categories of proper nouns used with *the* or without *the*. For example:

Buildings and places of interest: *Burj Khalifa, Capital Hotel, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, the Hilton Hotel, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Taj Mahal, the Sydney Opera House*
Schools: *Columbia University, Boston College/the Sorbonne, the U. S. Military Academy*
Companies: *General Motors, Bank of America/the Ford Motor Company, the World Bank*
Bridges: *London Bridge, Tower Bridge/the Golden Gate Bridge, the Brooklyn Bridge*
Works of art: *Mona Lisa, Girl with a Pearl Earring, Guitar, Bust of Nefertiti/the Sistine Madonna, the Nightwatch, the Burghers of Calais, the Terracota Army*

Capitalizing tricky proper nouns

If a common noun (*mum, pope, president, captain*) becomes a proper noun, it begins with a capital letter. The rule is, when we use such words, we capitalize them only if we use them exactly as names.

You can ask Mom. (but *You can ask your mum.*)
I'd like to meet Pope Francis. (but *I'd like to meet the pope.*)
Where was President Lincoln assassinated? (but *Who was the first president of the USA?*)
It was in 1778, when Captain Cook discovered the Hawaiian Islands. (but *Who is the captain of this ship?*)

Proper nouns exercises:

<https://www.e-grammar.org/proper-nouns-exercises/>

Our tip: www.e-grammar.org/pdf-books/ All PDF exercises + grammar rules in one place.