

Capitalization Cheat Sheet

1. **Headings.** Avoid ALL CAPS unless court rules require them. Instead, capitalize every word unless it is a preposition that has fewer than five letters (*of, with*), a conjunction (*and, or*), or an article (*a, an, or the*). Also capitalize an article, conjunction, or preposition if it is the first word or the last word, or if it follows a dash or a colon.
2. **Party affiliations.** Lowercase party affiliations (*defendant, plaintiff, appellant*) unless you're referring to the parties in the current dispute. Either way, skip the articles: "*Defendant* has failed to show" Not: "*The Defendant*."
3. **Courts.** Lowercase *court* unless you're referring to the U.S. Supreme Court or to the court you're addressing in your document.
4. **Federal, state, commonwealth.** Lowercase these words unless the word they modify is capitalized (*Federal Reserve*), they are part of a title (*Commonwealth of Virginia*), or you're referring to a party. You should thus lowercase "state law" and "federal law."