

## Capital Letters in French (majuscules)

Using capital letters in French correctly is essential for writing accurately. While there are similarities between English and French when it comes to capitalisation rules, there are also key differences that every French learner should be aware of.

In this article, we'll guide you through the rules of using capital letters in French, ensuring that your writing is not only correct, but also polished and professional.

### Capitalising places, names and events

Just like in English, capital letters in French are used for specific categories such as places, names, brands, and events.

#### Places

When writing about specific places, such as cities and countries, you should always capitalise the first letter. Here are some examples:

##### **Paris / la ville de Paris**

*Paris / the city of Paris*

##### **le Portugal**

*Portugal*

##### **la France**

*France*

In these examples, **Paris**, **Portugal** and **France** are capitalised because they are proper nouns referring to specific geographical locations.

#### Names

Personal names in French also require capitalisation, just as they do in English. Whether you're introducing yourself or mentioning someone else, the first letter of each name should be capitalised. For example:

##### **Je m'appelle Paul.**

*I'm called Paul.*

##### **Je m'appelle Jean-Pierre**

*I'm called Jean-Pierre.*

Notice that both Paul and Jean-Pierre have their first letters capitalised, as they are proper nouns.

#### Events

Special events, holidays, and significant occurrences also require the use of capital letters in French. This helps to emphasise their importance and distinguish them from everyday terms. Here are some examples:

##### **la Saint-Valentin**

*Valentine's Day*

##### **Noël**

*Christmas*

##### **Pâques**

*Easter*

## When not to use capital letters in French (minuscules)

While the use of some capital letters in French mirror those in English, there are notable differences, particularly regarding days of the week, months of the year, languages, and the pronoun **je**.

### Days of the week and months of the year

The days of the week in French are not capitalised. The same goes for months of the year. This is a significant difference from English and an important rule to remember. For example:

#### **tous les lundis**

*every Monday*

#### **le 8 juin**

*the 8th of June*

In these instances, **lundis** and **juin** are not capitalised. The same rule obviously applies to all days of the week and months of the year in French:

**lundi, mardi, mercredi, jeudi, vendredi, samedi, dimanche**

**janvier, février, mars, avril, mai, juin, juillet, août, septembre, octobre, novembre, décembre**

### Languages

When writing in French, the names of languages do not take a capital letter. This rule is different from in English, where language names are always capitalised:

#### **Je parle français.**

*I speak French.*

#### **Tu parles anglais.**

*You speak English.*

In both examples, **français** and **anglais** are written all in lowercase.

### The pronoun 'je'

The pronoun **je** ("I") is never capitalised in French, except at the beginning of a sentence. This contrasts sharply with English, where "I" is always capitalised. Let's see some examples:

#### **Je pense, donc je suis.**

*I think, therefore I am.*

#### **Il sait comment je m'appelle.**

*He knows what I'm called.*

As you can see, **je** remains all lowercase, unless it is the first word of the sentence.

### Special cases and common pitfalls

Understanding the general French capitalisation rules is crucial, but being aware of some special cases can also help you avoid common mistakes.

## Nationalities

When referring to nationalities in French, capitalise the noun but not the adjective:

**Les Français aiment le fromage.**

*French people like cheese.*

**Mon voisin est français.**

*My neighbour is French.*

This rule applies to all nationalities. Here are some others: **anglais, anglaise, américain, américaine, brésilien, brésilienne, chinois, chinoise, australien, australienne, égyptien, égyptienne, japonais, japonaise, allemand, allemande, espagnol, espagnole** etc.

## Administrative documents or announcements

In the following examples, note that the nouns **ville** and **gouvernement** are written with a capital letter only when they are used to refer to a specific institution.

**Paris est une ville.**

*Paris is a city.*

**La Ville de Paris a déclaré que tous les musées seraient fermés.**

*The City of Paris / The Administration of Paris announced that all museums would be closed.*

**Le Gouvernement du Québec va faire une annonce demain.**

*The Government of Quebec will be making an announcement tomorrow.*

**Il y a un nouveau gouvernement au Québec.**

*There is a new government in Quebec.*

## A recap of using capital letters in French

To summarise, here are the key points to remember about using capital letters in French:

- Use capitals for places, names, brands, and events.
- Do not use capitals for days of the week, months, languages, and the pronoun **je**.
- Pay attention to special cases, such as nationalities.

## No Capital Letters in French

**days and months**

**en septembre, ce lundi, dimanche prochain...**

**languages and nationalities**

**mon ami espagnol parle français.**

**je**

**il faut que je l'appelle.**

**Practising French capitalisation rules**

Now, let's put your knowledge to the test! Below are three sentences in English; your task is to translate them into French. Remember to pay close attention to capital letters, using French capitalisation rules.

1. *I love French and I love French food.*
2. *I love the French.*
3. *I leave on Christmas day. It is a Thursday.*