Capital Letters: Why Some Words Always Start With Big Letters

Key points

- Some words are the special names of one particular thing – like Monday, July or Manchester – and they always start with a capital letter wherever they appear in a sentence.
- These special-name words are called 'proper nouns' (as opposed to 'common nouns', which are words for any one of many things, like 'day', 'month' or 'town').
- Days of the week, months of the year and place names always need capital letters, even when they're not at the start of a sentence.
- You can test any noun by asking: 'Is this one specific named thing, or is it any one of many things?' – if it's one specific thing, it needs a capital.
- Children often master capitals for sentence starts and people's names before they spot other proper nouns – your child is practising a new step in their learning.

Things to try at home

- Play 'Capital Letter Hunt' together – look for capital letters in books, food packaging, shopping lists or signs around the house, and chat about what makes each word special.
- Create a sorting game with word cards: gather cards with 'Monday', 'day', 'Paris', 'city', 'September', 'month' – ask your child to sort them into 'one special thing' and 'could be any one' piles, then check the capital letters.
- Write together – a thank-you note, a shopping list, a note for the teacher – and when you spot a day, month or place name, pause to check: 'Does this one need a capital?'
- Look at a calendar together and name the days and months, noticing which letters are big ones; chat about why Monday is different from 'a Monday'.

Find out more

- Your child's teacher – they'll know exactly where your child is in their learning and can share the spellings and words they're practising at school.
- GOV.UK's National Curriculum guidance on English grammar and punctuation for Key Stage 1.
- Your school's website, literacy policy or parent information sheets – they may have their own examples of how capitals are taught.