

il

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# BOLLETTINO

INFORMATION AND TIPS ABOUT THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE

## Rules of Capitalization

*At times, Italian and English rules are different. Often, agencies or clients will wonder what is correct.*

*This issue of "il BOLLETTINO" continues the discussion of these differences and deals with the most common rules of capitalization.*



### Book, Manual, Report Titles

Only the first word of titles of books, manuals, magazines, newspapers, reports and their parts, such as chapters and sections, are capitalized in Italian. Thus, the title "Safety Instructions", is:

**Istruzioni di sicurezza** (with a lower case "s") and not "Istruzioni di Sicurezza".

Proper names are capitalized following the same rules as in English. Thus, the title "Fundamental Concepts of Galileo's Theory", is:

**Concetti fondamentali della teoria di Galileo** with "Galileo" capitalized, in addition to the first word of the title:

### First Letter after Colon

The first letter after a colon is not capitalized, except when the colon is used to introduce a vertical list. In this case, each "bullet" can be treated as a separate sentence that starts with a capital letter on the first word and ends with a period. For example, "Warning: Risk of personal injury" in Italian will be:

**Attenzione: rischio di lesioni alla persona** but the following is correct for a bulleted list:

**Questo capitolo include:**

- **La descrizione del prodotto e le norme di sicurezza.**
- **Le procedure di lubrificazione e manutenzione.**

### Civil, Military, Religious, and Other Similar Titles

Civil, military, religious, professional and other similar titles are normally written in all lower case when followed by the name of the person they are applied to. For example:

**il presidente Bush** (President Bush) and not "il Presidente Bush".

The title is capitalized, however, when used to refer to the official role or as a substitute for the person's name:

**il Presidente ha detto** (the President said)

### Names Indicating Nationality or Relation to a Geographical Region

Names indicating nationality or relation to a geographical region are not capitalized. However, names of peoples and ethnic groups are capitalized unless they are used as adjectives. For example:

**gli americani** (the Americans)

but

**gli Etruschi** (the Etruscans)

**l'arte etrusca** (the Etruscan art)

### Geographical terms

Geographical terms, such as channel, desert, etc. are not capitalized when they are followed by a preposition or when the term is not specifically needed to identify the geographical location in

common use. Of note, the term "ocean" is never capitalized. For example:

**il canale della Manica** (the English Channel)

**l'oceano Pacifico** (the Pacific Ocean)

### Geographical Directions, Streets and Roads

All terms indicating direction and the terms "road", "street", etc. are not capitalized, except for the proper name that may be associated with them. For example:

**nord, sud, ecc.** (North, South, etc.)

**l'autostrada di San Diego** (the San Diego Freeway)

**via Napoli** (Naples Street)

### Historical Periods and Events and Cultural Movements

All historical events, cultural movements and current historical periods are all lower case, except those of particular historical relevance. For example:

**la caduta di Roma** (the Fall of Rome)

**la prima guerra mondiale** (World War I)

**l'impressionismo** (the Impressionism)

**l'era spaziale** (the Space Age)

but

**il Medioevo** (the Middle Ages)

*Continued on reverse.*

## Sports and Sport Elements

Except for proper names, sports elements and events are not capitalized:

**la formula 1** (Formula 1)

**il campionato di calcio** (the Soccer Cup)

## Scientific and Technical Terms

Physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc. laws and principles are all written with lower case initial, except proper names. For example:

**la teoria della relatività di Einstein**  
(Einstein's Theory of Relativity)

In geology, the names of eras and geological periods are also all written in lower case. For example:

**l'età della pietra** (the Stone Age)

The names of chemical elements, organic and inorganic substances, minerals, metals, etc. are all written in lower case.

The names of illnesses (e.g., Hepatitis) and treatments are all written in lower case.

The names of hardware and software components are all written in lower case, except for proper names. For example:

**il tasto Avvio** (the Start Key)

where "Start" is used as the proper name of the key, but

**il tasto di avvio**

where "Start" is not used as the proper name of the key.

## Days and Months

The days of the week and the months of the year are all written in lower case.

For example:

**lunedì prossimo** (next Monday)

**25 gennaio 2001** (January 25, 2001)

## The Names of Languages

The names of languages, living or dead, are all written in lower case. For example:

**il manuale è disponibile in inglese e in italiano**  
(the manual is available in English and Italian)

quella poesia latina è stata tradotta dal greco  
(that Latin poem was translated from Greek)

For easy reference, these most common differences are summarized, with additional examples, in the table below.

### Examples of the most common differences between Italian and English capitalization:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Italian (English)</i>
<i>Titles (books, articles, chapters, etc.)</i>	<i>Informazioni generali (General Information)</i>
<i>First letter after colon (except bullet lists)</i>	<i>Nota: fare spazio per ... (Note: Make room for ...)</i>
<i>Titles (civil, military, religious, etc.)</i>	<i>il papa Giovanni (Pope John Paul)</i>
<i>Peoples or Groups</i>	<i>i tedeschi (the Germans)</i>
<i>Geographical terms</i>	<i>il deserto del Sahara (the Sahara Desert)</i>
<i>Geographical Directions, Streets and Roads</i>	<i>andare a ovest (to go West)</i>
<i>Historical Periods/Events and Cultural Movements</i>	<i>la seconda guerra mondiale (World War II)</i>
<i>Sports and Sport Elements</i>	<i>le olimpiadi di Sidney Sydney's Olympic Games</i>
<i>Scientific Laws/Principles</i>	<i>la legge di Newton (Newton's Law)</i>
<i>Geological Eras/Periods</i>	<i>il paleozoico (the Paleozoic)</i>
<i>Illnesses</i>	<i>virus dell'epatite B (Hepatitis B virus)</i>
<i>Days of the Week</i>	<i>il primo martedì del mese (the first Tuesday of the month)</i>
<i>Months</i>	<i>un marzo piovoso (a rainy March)</i>
<i>Languages</i>	<i>istruzioni solo in inglese (instructions only in English)</i>

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