Italian Capitalization Rules

The Italian language uses capital letters more sparingly than the English one. Many words that are capitalized in English are not capitalized in Italian. These include: the days of the week, the months of the year, proper adjectives, and a few proper nouns. These are the situations in which a capital letter is required.

PERSONAL NAMES: Names and surnames are always spelled with a capital letter:
- Paolo Bianchi
- Stefania Marini
- Tommaso Russo

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: Names of cities, countries, continents, rivers, mountains, seas, etc.
- Parigi = Paris
- Spagna = Spain
- Europa = Europe
- Danubio = Danube
- Monte Bianco = Mont Blanc
- Mar Tirreno = Thyrrenian Sea

PEOPLE OF A NATION: Nouns indicating people of a given nation or civilization (the Germans, the Egyptians, the Aztecs, etc.) require a capital letter. Nouns indicating people of a city, a region, etc., as well as all adjectives, instead, are spelled with a small (lowercase) letter. Only people from a given continent are sometimes spelled with a capital letter, as those from a country.
- i Russi = the Russians  but gli uomini russi = the Russian men
- i Greci = the Greeks  but le donne greche = the Greek women
- gli Etruschi = the Etruscans  but le tombe etrusche = the Etruscan tombs
  ...AND
- i londinesi = Londoners
- i romani = Romans
- gli asiatici or gli Asiatici = Asians
- gli americani or gli Americani = Americans
In the same way, the names of languages never require capital letters:
- il francese = French (language)
- l’italiano = Italian (language)
- il greco = Greek (language)
- l’inglese = English (language)
INSTITUTIONS AND SIMILAR ESTABLISHMENTS: In names of institutions, associations, etc. all nouns and adjectives require a capital letter, while prepositions do not.

- Parlamento della Repubblica = the Republic’s Parliament
- Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione = Ministry of Public Education
- Presidente del Consiglio = President of the Cabinet, Prime Minister, Premier

ADDRRESSES: Names of streets, squares, etc., require a capital letter, while the specification part (street, square, lane, etc.) may be spelled either with a capital or with a small letter. Prepositions eventually used in the address name require a small letter.

- via Torquato Tasso or Via Torquato Tasso
- piazza Giuseppe Verdi or Piazza Giuseppe Verdi
- via del Corso or Via del Corso

TITLES OF BOOKS, PAINTINGS AND OTHER WORKS OF ART: Usually these names only require a capital letter for the first word of the full name, while all the following ones have small letters. Such titles are usually spelled between quotation marks, or in italics.

- “Alla ricerca del tempo perduto” = “Remembrance of Thing Past”[novel by Marcel Proust]
- “Il nome della rosa” = “The Name of The Rose”[novel by Umberto Eco]
- “Il re e la regina” = “The King And The Queen”[sculpture by Henry Moore]

However, in titles capital letters are used for personal or geographic names, as in ordinary language:

- “La creazione di Adamo” = “Adam’s Creation”[fresco by Michelangelo Buonarroti]
- “I racconti di Canterbury” = “The Canterbury Tales”[poem by Geoffrey Chaucer]

Capital letters are also used for books which are given special respect:

- la Sacra Bibbia = the Holy Bible
- il Corano = the Coran

HONORIFIC TITLES: In most cases honorific titles may be spelled either with a capital letter (more formal) or not, provided that the following name always begins with a capital letter.

- (sig. = signor = mr.; mister) sig. Mario Rossi or Sig. Mario Rossi
- (sig.ra = signora = mrs.; mistress) sig.ra Norma Merisi or Sig.ra Norma Merisi
- (dott. = dottor / dottoressa = doctor) dott. Franco Bini or Dott. Franco Bini
- (prof. = professor / professoressa = professor) prof. Chiara Petri or Prof. Chiara Petri
- (rev. = reverendo / reverenda = reverend) rev. Giulio Monti or Rev. Giulio Monti

Capital letters are also sometimes used with an emphatic purpose, to indicate a high moral value of a given subject:

- l’arte = art
- la scienza = science
- l’uomo = the man

l’Arte = art in its best possible sense; the masterpieces; etc.
la Scienza = the scientific world; the scientific progress; etc.
l’Uomo = man; the human race; etc.