

2.2 Capitalization

The German use of capital letters differs in several ways from English usage.

■ 2.2.1 Nouns

In principle, all German nouns and words which are used as nouns begin with a capital letter:

der Mann (*the man*), die Deutschen (*the Germans*),
der Alte (*the old man*), die Bekannte (*the acquaintance*),
das Warten (*the waiting*)

- Also, nouns used in certain set expressions:
alles Mögliche (*everything possible*), aufs Neue (*anew, afresh, again*), in Bezug auf (*with reference to*), es tut mir Leid (*I'm sorry*), Schuld haben (*to be to blame*)

Exceptions to the above rule include the following:

- nouns used as adverbs
sonntags (*on Sundays*), abends (*in the evening*),
teils (*partly*), anfangs (*initially*)
- adjectives used as nouns, where an accompanying noun is implied:
Nimmst du die braunen *Are you taking the brown shoes?*
Schuhe?
Nein, lieber die schwarzen *No, I'd rather take the*
(Schuhe). *black ones.*
- the names of languages used in the following expressions, where they are thought of as part of an adverbial phrase and verb respectively:
ein deutsch/englisch *a German/English speaking*
sprechendes Ehepaar *couple*
französisch reden *to talk French*

■ 2.2.2 Pronouns

- The polite pronoun **Sie** (*you*) (see 14.1) in all its forms and the related possessive pronoun **Ihr** always begin with a capital letter:

Haben Sie Ihr Auto in der Nähe parken können? *Have you been able to park your car nearby?*

However, note that the reflexive pronoun **sich** does not take a capital letter when it refers back to **Sie**:
Wollen Sie sich nicht setzen? *Won't you take a seat?*

- The familiar pronouns **du** and **ihr** (*you*, singular and plural) (see 14.1) in all their forms, and the related possessive pronouns **dein** and **euer**, are written in lower case:

Liebe Susanne, *Dear Susanne,*
vielen Dank für dein Foto, *Many thanks for your*
auf dem du und dein *photo, which shows you*
Bruder mit eurem *and your brother with a*
Kollegen zu sehen seid. *colleague of yours.*

- The pronoun **ich**, unlike the English *I*, is not written with a capital letter.

■ 2.2.3 Adjectives

In principle, adjectives begin with a small letter. This includes adjectives of nationality, which in English begin with a capital:

deutsche Weine *German wines*

Exceptions to the above rule include the following:

- adjectives forming part of a geographical name or the name of something unique
der Nahe Osten (*the Middle East*), der Schiefe Turm von Pisa (*the leaning tower of Pisa*), die Deutsche Bundesbahn