

Capitalization of the words Tribe and Tribal

Quick Overview of Common Nouns and Proper Nouns

What is the difference between a common noun and a proper noun?

- A common **noun** is ANY non-specific person, place, or thing.
 - *Common noun: The **festival** is sponsored by the **city**.*
 - *Proper noun: The **38th Annual Renaissance Festival** is sponsored by **Phoenix**.*
- A **proper noun** is a particular person, place, or thing that is usually a one-of-a-kind item.
- **Proper nouns** are capitalized regardless of its position in a sentence.
- Names are always considered **proper nouns**.
 - *Proper noun: I took **Professor Palmer's** **classes** all four years of **college**.*
 - *Proper noun: We went to **Hoover Dam** for the **4th of July**.*

When should I consider “Tribe” or “Tribal” a proper noun?

- Tribe is capitalized when referencing a specific tribe.
 - *Capitalize: Pascua Yaqui **T**ribe*
 - *Capitalize: “The Ute Indian **T**ribe will to give their recommendation to **T**ribal Council.”*
 - *Capitalize: “The **T**ribe should consider participating in this program because x, y, and z.”*
- Tribe is also capitalized when mentioning Tribal governments or Tribal leaders
 - *Correct: “**T**ribal Chairman, (insert name here), introduced...”*

When should I consider “tribe” or “tribal” a common noun?

- Consider tribe a common noun when not referring to a specific tribe or when you are not referencing back to a specific tribe.
- Tribe is a common noun when it is used like any other common noun.
 - *Lowercase: “Projects on **t**ribal lands are...”*
 - *There are many lands that are considered tribal and it does not focus on a specific tribe’s land; therefore, this is a common noun.*
 - *Lowercase: “The **t**ribal perspective...”*
 - *No reference to a specific tribe’s perspective; therefore, this is a common noun.*
 - *Lowercase: “For all projects on the reservation, **t**ribal and federal...”*
 - *This example mentions all projects and doesn’t specify a certain tribal or federal program; therefore, this is a common noun.*

Some rules to follow when deciding whether to capitalize tribes:

- Be mindful of how you are using a noun.
 - Usage will determine if it is a proper noun or common noun.
- Similarly, the usage of your noun will determine how you are using the word **Tribes** or **tribes**.