

# Southern Capitalization Cheat Sheet

From Scribbles and Grits

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## Welcome to the Porch Posse, MoonPie Maverick!

*Well, I declare - I'm delighted you've joined our Southern circle! As promised, here's your first little surcee: a handy guide to Southern capitalization that'll have you writing with confidence faster than you can say "sweet tea." Whether you're sharing recipes, telling stories, or just spreading some Southern sunshine in your emails, this cheat sheet will help you get those capital letters just right. Keep it nearby, y'all - it's a small thing that makes a big difference in your Southern writing!*

Warmly,  
Elizabeth ✨

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## QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

### ✓ CAPITALIZE "SOUTHERN" WHEN:

- Part of a proper noun: **Southern** Baptist Convention
- Referring to the cultural region: **Southern** literature
- Beginning a sentence: **Southern** traditions are...
- In recognized regions: **Southern** Appalachians, **Deep South**
- In established cuisines: **Southern** cooking, **Southern** cuisine
- Organization names: **Southern** Historical Association
- Publications & titles: **Southern** Living magazine

### ✗ DO NOT CAPITALIZE "southern" WHEN:

- Simple compass direction: Drive **south**
  - General descriptor: The **southern** part of town
  - Referring to hemispheres: **southern** hemisphere
  - General adjective: **southern** exposure
  - General style reference: **southern**-inspired decor
  - General food description: **southern**-style barbecue
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## EXAMPLES IN CONTEXT



### PROPER NOUN FORMS (Capitalize)

The **Southern** United States has a rich musical heritage.  
She graduated from **Southern** Methodist University.  
The **Southern** Baptist Convention held their annual meeting.  
We visited the **South Carolina Lowcountry** for vacation.  
He plans a road trip through the **Southern** Appalachians.



### CULTURAL & FOOD REFERENCES (Capitalize)

**Southern** hospitality makes visitors feel welcome.  
His book explores **Southern** literature of the 20th century.  
**Southern** cuisine is famous for its comfort foods.  
She specializes in traditional **Southern** baking.  
We enjoyed authentic **South Carolina** shrimp and grits.  
**Tennessee** whiskey adds flavor to **Memphis**-style barbecue sauce.  
The **Louisiana** gumbo recipe has been in my family for generations.

### COMPASS DIRECTIONS (Don't Capitalize)

We're heading **south** for winter.  
The storm is moving in a **southern** direction.  
The **southern** border of the property needs new fencing.  
She lives in the **southern** part of Atlanta.  
If you drive **south** from Washington, D.C., you'll reach Richmond.

### HEMISPHERES (Don't Capitalize)

In the **southern** hemisphere, the seasons are opposite.  
Countries in the **southern** hemisphere include Australia and Chile.  
The **Southern** United States experiences milder winters than countries in the **southern** hemisphere.

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## SPECIAL CASES

### SPECIFIC REGIONAL DESIGNATIONS

- ✓ **Southern** California (specific region)
- Northern** Virginia (specific region)
- Eastern** Shore (of Maryland) (specific region)
- Western** North Carolina (specific region)
- Central** Florida (specific region)
- Deep South** (recognized region)
- ✗ **southern** parts of California (general area)
- western** regions of the state (general area)
- southern** towns (general description)

### SOUTHEASTERN

- ✓ Capitalize as proper noun: **Southeastern** Conference (SEC)
- Capitalize as formal region: **Southeastern** United States
- ✗ Don't capitalize as direction: **southeastern** corner of Wyoming
- Don't capitalize as general area: **southeastern** coast of Spain

### SOUTHBOUND

- ✓ Capitalize in proper names: **Southbound** Express Train
- Don't capitalize as direction: Take the **southbound** lane
- ✗ Don't capitalize as general term: The **southbound** migration of birds

### CIVIL WAR REFERENCES

- ✓ Capitalize entities: The **South** seceded from the Union
- Capitalize sides: The **North's** industrial capacity
- Capitalize cultural groups: **Southern** plantation owners
- ✗ Don't capitalize directions: Armies marched **south**
- Don't capitalize general descriptions: **northern** factories to **southern** battlefields

## SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

- ✓ Capitalize "Southern": **Southern** hospitality (cultural concept)
  - ✗ Don't capitalize "hospitality": **Southern** hospitality, not **Southern Hospitality**
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## FOOD REFERENCES

### CAPITALIZE:

**Southern** cuisine features abundant fresh vegetables.  
She specializes in traditional **Southern** baking.  
**Southern** fried chicken is a comfort food staple.  
**South Carolina** shrimp and grits

### DON'T CAPITALIZE:

The restaurant serves **southern**-style barbecue.  
She adds a **southern** twist to classic Italian dishes.  
The cookbook features **southern**-inspired recipes.

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## PRO TIPS FOR SOUTHERN WRITERS

- When referring to the American Civil War, "the **South**" and "the **North**" are always capitalized
  - Place names are always capitalized (**Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans**)
  - Be consistent within your publication - if you decide to capitalize something unusual, maintain that style throughout
  - When in doubt about a specific Southern term, check how reputable Southern publications like **Southern Living** or the **Atlanta Journal-Constitution** handle it
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Visit [www.scribblesandgrits.com](http://www.scribblesandgrits.com) for more **Southern** writing tips and resources