

Journalism Style

Using Trademarked Names

You've learned that you should avoid using trademarked names unless you are certain of the brand and the brand is important to the story.

Sometimes a brand name, if accurately reported, is powerful. As the Associated Press Stylebook points out "*He fished a Camel from his shirt pocket* may be preferable to the less specific *cigarette*."

Once you have verified a brand name, you need to know how to spell, space and capitalize the name correctly. If you write "I collected my little sister from her day care, a room that smelled of Play-Doh and crayons," you still have research to do.

Is it Play-Do or Play Do or PlayDo or Play-do or Play Doh or Play-Doh or Play-doh or Playdo? Play dough?

Is crayon a brand name? If it isn't, it should not be capitalized.

Several sources will help you, including the Associated Press Stylebook, the official website of the company holding the trademark, Wikipedia and other credible online sources, and the American Heritage Dictionary.

- The Associated Press Stylebook is a resource for some questions about brand names. Is Novocain a brand name? (It is.) Is nylon a brand name? (It is not.)
- Look online for the official website of the company. Hasbro will clearly spell out the correct name for its product, Play-Doh. You should use the capital letters, spacing and the hyphen just as Hasbro does. If a company holds a trademark, they are very likely to also have a website.
- Wikipedia can be a helpful, though not definitive, second source if you cannot find an official website. It sometimes mentions when a name has ceased to be a trademark, for instance when *Kerosene* simply became *kerosene*. Wikipedia states kerosene "was registered as a trademark by Abraham Gesner in 1854 before evolving into a genericized trademark."
- Search online for the word, followed by the word *trademark*. If you type *Google* and *trademark* you will find a very long list of trademarks [™] that Google holds. And that Google should be capitalized.
- The American Heritage Dictionary has the word *crayon* without a capital, so it is not a trademarked name, though *Crayola* is.

Try It!

1. With a partner or group, research which of the following are brand names and therefore require capitalization. Correctly spell, capitalize, space and hyphenate the words in the brand names.

aspirin

astro turf

auto tune

band aid

blackBerry

bubble wrap

cell phone

cellophane

chap stick

coke

crescent wrench

crock pot

down load webmaster

dry ice

dumpster

e bay Inc.

e book

e book reader

e mail

e reader

escalator

face book

frisbee

hacky sac

hash tag

hula hoop

IM (as in IMed, IMing) for instant messenger)

internet

iPadipad

iphone

ipod

jeep

kerosene

kitty litter

laser

linked in
mace (the chemical spray)
margarine
net (for internetInternet)
nylon
onesies
photoshop
ping pong
power point
q tip
roller blade
saran wrap
sharpie (the pen)
smart phone
social media
stetson
styrofoam
superheroes
tarmac
taser
teflon
thermos
trampoline
tupperware
tweet
twitter
videotape
web page
website
windex
white out
world wide web
you tube

2. Skim through 30 pages or 300 entries in the Associated Press Stylebook in print or online, noting any possibly trademarked words. Report what you find to a small group.