

## Mum/mum and Dad/dad

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It can be tricky to remember when to use a capital letter for terms expressing family relationships. But there is a convention you can follow. Take this sentence:

‘Can I have a fiver, Mum?’

Here, ‘Mum’ is being used like a name; it’s what you call her when you’re speaking to her directly. You could write the same sentence but replace ‘Mum’ with the name of another person, like Lizzie, Charlie or Han Solo, and it would still make sense.

Perhaps our speaker later tells a friend about their attempt to get hold of some cash:

‘I asked Mum for a fiver, but she said no.’

It doesn’t matter that Mum isn’t being spoken to directly here; the word ‘Mum’ is still being used like a proper name. Compare that to:

‘I asked my mum for a fiver, but she said no.’

Here, ‘mum’ isn’t being used like a proper name. When family titles are used after a possessive form or an article (‘his dad’, ‘Jasmine’s cousin’, ‘all the fathers I know’, ‘being a mother’), no capital is needed.

Here are some examples using other family members:

‘Come on, Auntie June, or we’ll miss the train!’

This was a subject Grandad knew a lot about.

I spent more time with Uncle Matthew than with my other uncles.

Morgan looked forward to visiting her gran every holiday.

This rule can be less securely applied to ‘son’ and ‘daughter’, ‘brother’ and ‘sister’. From my reading, it appears more usual not to capitalise in sentences like ‘Bring the car back in one piece, son.’ I’ve sometimes seen a capital used for ‘sis’ (as in ‘Hi, Sis!’), but never for ‘bro’.