What is the Difference Between a Brand Name and a Generic Name?

As we learned last unit drug names have a very detailed process for selection and a multitude of options as well. After the trade name has been assigned, packaging and marketing do their thing. On the package label you will see the brand name usually in big bold letters and pretty colors, and the generic name in smaller letters, sometimes under the brand name or off to the side, and maybe in the bottom corner.

One thing you will also see is that one name is capitalized and one is not. The brand or trade name is always capitalized and the generic name is never capitalized, with very minimal, limited exceptions. NPH insulin would be an example of that.

Here is a list of common brands with their generic names:

- Zantac — ranitidine
- Prevacid — lansoprazole
- Nexium — esomeprazole
- Humulin N — NPH insulin
- OxyContin — oxycodone
- Xylocaine — lidocaine

So, as you work up your application exercises, and complete the fill-in-the-blank answers on your exams, you will need to make sure you are utilizing the rules for capitalization when answering questions to assure that you take advantage of all possible points.