U.S. Department of War

MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY

# MC&FP Style Guide

Friday, October 9, 2026

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# Welcome to the MC&FP Style Guide

Together we can help build recognition and trust with our audience through written and visual consistency of the Military Community and Family Policy brand.

This site provides editorial and visual guidance to staff and contractors who support MC&FP and related programs.

Ready to get oriented? Try our online intro and skills assessment.

Learn More »

## Use of Terms A - Z

Answer your editorial questions through this list of commonly used terms. You will find everything from definitions to using hyphens.

## Visual Style Guides

Build a cohesive brand by using consistent colors, fonts, and correct logo placement.

## Program Content Guides

Make sure you have this program-specific context and accurate terminology when writing for a specific MC&FP program.

## Logos

Download the logos for MC&FP and related programs.

# Resources

Use the following resources for additional information and assistance in matters related to styling and formatting Military Community and Family Policy content.

- The Associated Press Stylebook provides guidelines on editorial styling and publishing practices that this style guide does not cover. The MC&FP Style Guide supersedes the AP Stylebook when there are differences between the two.
- The Merriam-Webster dictionary addresses spelling, usage and capitalization guidance that this guide does not define or address.
- The Defense Technical Information Center provides guidance for developers of Defense Department technical documents.
- The DOD Issuance Style Guide and the **DOD Issuances website** provide guidance for developing policy documents, including DOD directives, instructions and manuals.
- MilLife Learning is a web-based training site that provides self-directed, user-focused courses on quality of life topics for military families as well as useful information for the service providers who support them. It's accessible 24/7, anywhere with an internet connection. Visit MilLife Learning to view the latest course offerings, including the three-course Section 508 series that helps third-party content creators and MC&FP staff learn how to produce Section 508-compliant PDFs, PowerPoints and videos. **MC&FP Editorial Style Update**

Department of Defense to Department of War updates are ongoing. Check each organization's website for the most up-to-date title information. For more DOW publications guidance, review the most recent DOW Issuances Style Guide PDF, which you can access through the Washington Headquarters Services Plain Language page.**MC&FP Editorial Style UpdateWriting for the Web** – Understand that readers tend to skip over paragraphs that are too long. To make content more accessible:

Strive to create paragraphs that are no longer than three lines in a Word document. Paragraphs with four lines should be the absolute maximum and used sparingly. Break longer paragraphs into shorter paragraphs or lists for easier scanning. Avoid pages and articles that are excessively long. While the content might be valuable, if an article is not easy to scan, many users may not read it in full. Review content to see if it's covered in other locations to help decrease the length of articles and pages.

For half-width content or content that occupies a smaller width area, such as verbiage placed next to an action card, paragraphs may extend to four to five lines. In a Word document, the content would take up two or three lines only. Published content with six or more lines, even shorter lines, appears too long to the user. The reader may skip the content.

**MC&FP Editorial Style UpdateBranding and Logos for MC&FP and Support Programs** – Approved versions of MC&FP branding and program logos are available here along with complete instructions for using them. Users must meet the guidance provided. Of note, **the DOD logo and the DOD seal are not interchangeable.**

Follow these usage guidelines:

In keeping with brand standards, the DOD logo may be used in all communications across all media platforms. The DOD seal has very restricted usage. The DOD seal's use is restricted to official DOD top leader correspondence, legal documents, reports, memoranda, ceremonial booklets, certificates and awards. The DOD and military seals may not be used on flyers or other promotional materials. These seals may be used only by the military departments for official purposes.

View more updates on the Branding and Logos page.

**MC&FP Editorial Style UpdateUse of Shortcut URLs** – Typically, 301 redirects are used for expired pages, after URLs have moved, and when consolidating duplicate content. It also makes sense to use 301 redirects for shortcut URLs that will always go to the same destination URLs.

MilTax vanity URL: https://www.militaryonesource.mil/miltax

MilTax landing page absolute URL: https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/taxes/miltax-military-tax-services/**Editorial Style Update**

**Updated Terms A-Z** – Visit the following pages for new and updated terms:

Terms P, Terms R , Terms S, Terms T, Terms V, Terms W, Terms X**Editorial Style Update**

**MC&FP Mission Statement** – Quality of life policies and programs that help our service members, their families and survivors be well and mission ready.**Editorial Style UpdateAbbreviations, Acronyms and Brevity Codes** – These commonly known abbreviations and acronyms are acceptable upon first reference without introduction — including in headings, chapter titles and tables of contents — although there may be occasions when fully writing out the terms would be preferable:

- **NEX for Navy Exchange** (use this term for the military audience)
- **NEXCOM for Navy Exchange Service Command** (only use this term for internal reporting)

# Writing Best Practices

This style guide provides writers with general principles and specific guidance for developing all content for Military Community and Family Policy. These guidelines follow those established by The Associated Press Stylebook and the Merriam-Webster dictionary. They also support the consistent use of Military OneSource's brand voice in all communications.

You'll find general direction in this portion of the guide, including instructions on capitalization, spelling, preferred usage and so on, along with many examples. Under Use of Terms A-Z, you'll find more specific instructions, with military-specific terms, acronyms, titles and so on listed alphabetically. When preparing to write any document, remember that our readers lead busy lives, and many other resources and outlets compete for their time. Consider the following writing tips:

**Write for your readers**. Every piece — whether a news story, blog post or brochure — needs to tell readers:

- What's in it for them
- What you want them to do
- Why they should read it in the first place
- Why they should read it NOW
- Why they should read your piece instead of someone else's

**Use some basic techniques.** Your readers are busy people seeking information. Use their time wisely.

- Open with your main point.
- Stick to one MAIN idea.

- Focus on what your readers need.
- Be descriptive, but use short words and short sentences.
- Spell out action explicitly (i.e., “Find Your School Liaison”).
- Keep your lists parallel.
- Ensure content does not assume a specific season.

**Know your readers.** It’s the only way they will understand you.

- **Who?** What are the readers’ educational backgrounds, ages, sexes and attitudes? What are the benefits and risks for readers?
- **When?** When will the readers read your message? How much time will they spend on it? When do they have to act?
- **Where?** Where are readers in the chain of command? Where do they work — in an office, in the field, at home? Where are they receiving the message and on what type of device or platform?
- **How?** How interested are readers in the arrival of your message? How will they feel about it?
- **Why?** Why are you writing? Why should readers respond?

**Remember reaching our audience matters**. Ensure your writing reflects and advances the Defense Department’s commitment to supporting its entire military community and allows audiences to feel seen, recognized, respected and valued.

- Avoid assuming readers’ backgrounds so as not to exclude anyone.
- Use language that notes the person and then the description, such as: a child with ADHD; a person with autism; a family member with special needs; a person without a home; or a person who uses a wheelchair.
- Use language that is clear, objective and free of stereotypes to avoid the risk of confusing or upsetting readers.
- Avoid generalizations.
- Don’t disclose details of a person’s or group’s background if the details are irrelevant to the subject matter or against the person’s or group’s wishes.
- Remember that language continually evolves, and preferred terms may fall out of favor. For the latest guidance, consult The Associated Press Stylebook.
- Avoid terms that suggest pity: “The organization helps veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder” instead of “the organization helps veterans who suffer from PTSD.”

Families and relationships come in many different configurations.

- Don’t assume that all couples are married and live together.
- Remember that family structures vary. Grandparents may be the primary caregivers for their grandchildren (for example, caring for the children while their service member is deployed); some

parents are single by choice or circumstance; and siblings may be related through both parents, one, or neither parent (i.e., full siblings, half-siblings, step-siblings and adopted siblings).

- Remember that not all family members live under the same roof.

The DOD recognizes the right of service members to observe the tenets of their religion, or to observe no religion at all. When addressing religious faith or cultural practices in writing, keep the following in mind:

- Use nondenominational terms.
- Aim to incorporate examples of holidays and cultural traditions from different backgrounds. An article about connecting as a family during the holidays might say: "If your family celebrates one of the winter holidays, set aside an evening together to string popcorn for your Christmas tree or decorate your home for Hanukkah or Kwanzaa. If holidays aren't part of your tradition, connect as a family by preparing your favorite snacks and playing board games."
- Avoid assumptions about your audience's belief system, cultural traditions and observances: "You might find a support group at your house of worship, if you attend one," instead of, "You might find a support group at your church."

Be mindful when describing where people fall on the socioeconomic scale or their education level. Many seemingly innocuous words can be demeaning or stigmatizing. The word "needy" conveys helplessness. Instead of "Needy people visited the food pantry," say, "People experiencing food insecurity visited the food pantry."

- Focus on what people have, rather than on what they lack or failed to accomplish: "People who completed some high school (or specify the last grade completed, if known)," rather than "high school dropout."

**Section 508 Compliance**

MC&FP complies with federal standards, which implement the 1998 amendment to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. This ensures equal access to online content, regardless of ability, as required by law.

Accessible content must be readable via a screen reader for users with low or no vision, must include audio and video transcripts and captions for those with hearing loss, and must use clear language and formatting. Pages must be navigable for those with impaired mobility and colorblindness.

Ensuring that all users can access MC&FP's digital content requires a coordinated effort involving everyone from programmers to 508-compliance testers. As a writer, make sure your content is accessible to all users, as required by law, by doing the following:

- Follow plain-language guidelines (as required by the Plain Writing Act of 2010).
- Avoid long blocks of text, which can be difficult for people with cognitive impairments and learning disabilities to understand.
- Use bullets, which make information easier to scan and understand.
- Write descriptive headings so the reader will know what to expect.
- Use formatting and style options for headings and subheadings so they can be recognized by screen readers.

- Write meaningful text when hyperlinking so users will know where the link will take them. For example, write: “Download the user guide” instead of “Click here.”

Designers shall create accessible content by doing the following:

- Make sure the contrast between the text and its background is high enough to be read by people with low vision. For example, avoid gray text on a white background.
- Check for high color contrast on graphics so they can be distinguished by users with colorblindness or other visual impairments.
- Don’t rely on color alone to guide the user. Include labels.
- Tag images with descriptive alternative text for screen readers.

For more tips on how to create accessible content, including eLearning courses and checklists for creating different types of content, see Legal and Administrative on MilitaryOneSource.mil.

## Abbreviations, Acronyms and Brevity Codes

Write for your readers. Avoid alphabet soup. Never use abbreviations for Military Community and Family Policy program names unless otherwise noted in their program content guides. Spell out all other commonly abbreviated organizational names and terms on first reference. Thereafter, if a sentence can do without the associated abbreviation, acronym or brevity code, do not use one. For example: *The Exceptional Family Member Program serves military families with special needs. The program ensures that a family member’s educational or medical needs receive consideration during the assignment coordination process*.

- Do not begin a sentence with an acronym or abbreviation unless it is the second reference or later (with a few exceptions for commonly known abbreviations, as discussed below).
- The fact that an acronym exists does not necessarily mean the words of the spelled-out version should be capitalized. For example, PCS stands for permanent change of station, not Permanent Change of Station. In spelled-out versions of such terms that will appear later as acronyms or abbreviations, capitalize only the words that are proper nouns or that begin a sentence.
- Once a term is spelled out in its first mention, you can use its abbreviation, acronym or brevity code thereafter. (For example: Use Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program on first reference and use SECO thereafter.) Interspersing “the program” or another similar identifying term in the copy is acceptable to avoid alphabet soup.
- These commonly known abbreviations and acronyms are acceptable upon first reference without introduction — including in headings, chapter titles and tables of contents — although there may be occasions when fully writing out the terms would be preferable:
    - **AAFES** for Army and Air Force Exchange Service
    - **CGX** for Coast Guard Exchange
    - **CONUS** for continental United States
    - **DEERS** for Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System
    - **DIMS** for Defense Installation Messaging System (This acronym would appear only in documents and communications with installation DIMS managers.)

- **DMDC** for Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC is the official name)
- **DoDEA** for Department of Defense Education Activity (When writing for new-to-the-military audiences, write out Department of Defense Education Activity early in the body copy for audience convenience. Note the use of lowercase “o” in this acronym, per the program’s preference.)
- **EFMP** for Exceptional Family Member Program
- **ID or military ID** instead of “identification card” or “military identification card,” respectively
- **JAG** for judge advocate general
- **LES** for Leave and Earnings Statement
- **MCX** for Marine Corps Exchange
- **MWR** for Morale, Welfare and Recreation
- **NEX for Navy Exchange** (use this term for the military audience)
- **NEXCOM for Navy Exchange Service Command** (only use this term for internal reporting)
- **OCONUS** for outside the continental United States
- **PCS** for permanent change of station
- **PT or PRT** for physical training or physical readiness training
- **PTSD** for post-traumatic stress disorder
- **PX** for Post Exchange
- **Space-A** for space-available flights or travel program

- When writing a guide or publication that is broken into chapters or sections, spell out the abbreviation, acronym or brevity code on first use within each chapter.
- When writing content for a website, reintroduce the abbreviation, acronym or brevity code on each page of content. If the reader has to click through more than one screen or different accordion features, reintroduce it on each screen.
- Abbreviations, acronyms and brevity codes disrupt readability. Avoid most uses when developing content for a PowerPoint presentation or eLearning module.
- Spell out Defense Department on first reference, then use DOD or “the department.”
- Refrain from including abbreviations, acronyms or brevity codes in headers, chapter titles, tables of contents, etc.
- Abbreviations, acronyms and brevity codes are acceptable in tables and charts only if space is an issue. Ideally, the term is spelled out prior to the table or chart if the abbreviation, acronym or brevity code appears in the table or chart.

# Writing for the Web

Writing for the web varies significantly from writing for journals, newspapers or other print media. People visiting websites tend to scan pages for useful information. If they do not find it quickly, they often move on to another site.

Here are some basic guidelines to help structure and organize content written for **Military Community and Family Policy websites and applications:**

- Brevity is essential. When possible, avoid forcing readers to scroll through text — you risk losing them.
- Understand that readers tend to skip paragraphs that are too long. To make content more accessible:
    - Strive to create paragraphs that are shorter than three lines in a Word document. Paragraphs with four lines should be used sparingly.
    - Break longer paragraphs into shorter paragraphs or lists for easier scanning.
    - Avoid pages and articles that are excessively long. The content might be valuable, but users may not read it in full because the article is difficult to scan.
    - Review content to see if it's covered in other locations to help decrease the length of articles and pages.
- For half-width content or content that occupies a smaller width area, such as verbiage placed next to an action card, paragraphs may extend to four to five lines. In a Word document, the content would take up two or three lines only. Published content with six or more lines, even shorter lines, appears too long to the user and they may skip the content.
- When text on a single page requires scrolling, use clear, concise headings and subheadings to help readers quickly find the content they need.
- Use bulleted lists when possible and appropriate.
- Never underline text. Underlining generally indicates a hyperlink on a website. Additional underlining may be confusing for the reader.
- Unless you have prior permission, hyperlinks must direct readers to government websites such as .mil or .gov websites. You can submit link requests for government review and for linking on websites through the Link Vetting Application, or LVA. To access the LVA, a user must have the following authorizations in the order listed: 1) common access card or external certificate authority, 2) single sign-on account, 3) link vetting account.
- Do not use "please" in content for MC&FP digital properties, including websites, applications and social platforms. This also includes website articles, collateral material and social posts. For example, **do not say:** *Please visit MilitaryINSTALLATIONS when planning your next move.* Instead, **say:** *Visit MilitaryINSTALLATIONS when planning your next move.* "Please" is acceptable, however, in blogs and correspondence, as appropriate. Outreach Operations must approve all other exceptions.

# Writing for My Military OneSource App

Content developed for the My Military OneSource app should generally follow the Military Community and Family Policy Style Guide and The Associated Press Stylebook. The list below provides specific guidance about capitalization, use of acronyms and character count limits.

General app style:

- Title cap names of benefits and MilLife Guides.
- Use "&" as opposed to "and" for category buttons.
- Spell out terms on first reference and then use commonly known acronyms in subsequent references within the same benefit description or MilLife Guide.

My MilLife Guide style:

- Follow the My MilLife Guide template when creating a new guide. Include the guide introduction text, four related articles, at least one related website/tool, at least one related benefit and at least two examples in the expert section.
- Do not exceed 55 characters for guide names.
- Do not send users to an article or page on the MilitaryOneSource.mil website when linking to related websites/tools. The only exception is if the user is being directed to a specific product in the Products section.
- Start the content for the Connect With Our Experts section with "Military OneSource is here for you when you are ready — to help you understand and get connected to the resources and benefits available to you. Here are a few:".

# Capitalization

Capitalization errors and mistakes can be easy to overlook. See the guidelines below to ensure proper use of capitalization rules when writing for Military Community and Family Policy:

- For the capitalization of specific terms, see the **A – Z Terms** section at the end of this guide.
- If creating or working on a glossary, capitalize the first word of the term being defined only if it is a proper name, for example: **child abuse** – *This refers to any physical injury, sexual maltreatment, emotional maltreatment, deprivation of necessities, lack of supervision or combinations of these actions or omissions toward a child by an individual responsible for the child's welfare*.
- Do not capitalize "services," "service member" or "service provider."
- Always capitalize the names of the U.S. military services: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, Army Reserves, Marine Corps Reserves and Navy Reserves. Do not capitalize "reserves."
- For headings and composition titles, capitalize all words except articles (unless they are the first or last words in the header or title), prepositions less than four letters long, "to" in infinitives and coordinating conjunctions.
- For subheaders within an article, only capitalize the first word and proper nouns.

- Military titles, such as "commander," are capitalized only when used as part of a title.
- Directives, instructions or any other name of a regulation should be capitalized only if they are being used to describe a *specific regulation. Note: If you are looking for instructions or directives, the* ***Defense Technical Information Center*** *has a comprehensive database. DOD Directive 6400.1 addresses the Family Advocacy Program*.
- Specific programs and services available to service members should be capitalized, but general services should not be: The Family Advocacy Program is one of several advocacy services available to service members on an installation.
- For a hyphenated word in a heading or composition title, capitalize the first letter of the second word: "*The Star-Spangled Banner." No-Cost Services Available to Military Families*. The exception to this is *Non-medical Counseling*.
- The order of precedence for the military services (and their respective seals) is:
    - Army
    - Marine Corps
    - Navy
    - Air Force
    - Space Force
    - Coast Guard
    - Army National Guard
    - Army Reserve
    - Navy Reserve
    - Marine Corps Reserve
    - Air National Guard
    - Air Force Reserve
    - Coast Guard Reserve
- When referring to the National Guard and the reserves together, the National Guard comes first.

## Lists

Lists are a great way to organize ideas visually and enhance readability. When using lists:

- Use bullets rather than numbers unless sequential order is important. If you have more than five bullets, you have too many for a reader's quick look. Reconsider how you are displaying the information.
- Each bullet in a list should have parallel structure. For example, if one bullet begins with a verb, all bullets should start with a verb.

- Capitalize the first word of the bulleted content, and finish with a period only if it is a complete sentence.
- Bulleted lists should have at least two items. If there is only one, it can most likely be added to the sentence before it.
- Use a colon after introductory text.

*Services for new parents include:*

- *New Parent Support Program*
- *Parenting classes*
- *Child care*

## Numbers and Dates

See the guidelines below for proper use of numbers and dates in content for Military Community and Family Policy:

- In running text, spell out whole numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above.
- Spell out numbers when they are the first word in a sentence.
- Always use numerals for ages and for percentages, except when they are the first word in a sentence.
- Use the percent sign (%) when pairing with a numeral.
- Use Arabic numerals with the exception of the sequence of wars, people or animals, which take Roman numerals (World War II, Queen Elizabeth I).
- When labeling figures, tables, slides, modules, chapters, etc., use numerals: Slide 3 instead of Slide Three.
- Dates should take the following order: month, day, year: Sept. 7, 2023.
- Include the year in the date if it will help the reader in any way or if the event spans more than one calendar year.
- When it is clear that an upcoming event does not extend into the following calendar year, do not include the year. Examples:
    - The Military Community and Family Policy applications will be undergoing maintenance from 9 a.m. EDT Saturday, Oct. 9, to 5 p.m. EDT Sunday, Oct. 10.
        - The event runs from March 15 to July 15.
        - The event runs from 9 a.m. EDT March 15 until 5 p.m. EDT March 16.
    - The event runs from 9 a.m. EDT Tuesday, March 15, until 5 p.m. EDT Wednesday, March 16.
        - The event runs Feb. 10-20.
        - Learn about virtual careers at MSEP partner VAUSA at 1 p.m. EDT on Thursday, Oct. 7.

- Once you introduce the year and the time period is clear, do not repeat the year within the same document: *The 2023 Domestic Violence Awareness Month campaign is designed to promote the idea that preventing domestic abuse is a shared community responsibility that starts with a message of support for victims. The campaign runs Oct. 1-31.*

## Parallel Construction

For reading ease, use parallel structure. By using the same pattern of words when expressing more than one idea, you enhance reader comprehension.

Headings, listed items and items in a series need parallel structure. For example, if one item in a list starts with a verb, all items in the list should start with a verb as shown below:

*Military leaders are encouraged to consider the following recommendations when deciding how to appropriately respond to an incident:*

- *Treat victims with respect and compassion, and listen to their concerns without judgment.*
- *Ensure that victims are made aware of available Military OneSource services both on and off the installation.*

## Punctuation

Use proper punctuation for clarity and reading ease.

- Do not use a comma before a conjunction in a simple series: The flag was red, white and blue.
- Use a comma before a conjunction in a complex sentence: Military OneSource provides information for military leaders, service and family members, and service providers.
- Place a comma between two independent clauses that are connected by a coordinating conjunction such as (and, so, but, nor, yet and or): Department of Defense Education Activity schools within the United States may open enrollment to other children, but it will be on a space-available basis.
- Use a comma to set off introductory elements: For more information on requirements for Department of Defense Education Activity schools, contact your local school.
- Place periods and commas inside of closing quotation marks: Use the words “website,” “email” and “text.”
- If a web address is at the end of a sentence, follow it with a period.
- Do not use exclamation points when writing for Military Community and Family Policy, unless part of an official name such as the DOD MWR Libraries Summer Reading Program, Reading Takes You Everywhere!

Punctuate dates and date ranges as follows:

- Month, day, year: Sept. 7, 2018
- Date range: Nov. 10-15 [hyphen and no spaces]
- Date range: *I will be here from Oct. 14, 2022, to Jan. 18, 2023.* [Use a comma after the year and before “to.”]

- Date range without year: *I will be here from Oct. 14 to Nov. 25.* [Do not use a comma.]
- Date range: August – November [en dash (not em dash) with one space on either side of the dash for month range]
- Date range: Aug. 14-Sept. 29 [hyphen and no space]
- To indicate someone's lifetime: May 1, 1921, to Aug. 16, 1974 [no hyphen or dash; use "to"]

## Tables, Charts and Graphs

- Label pictures, illustrations and charts below the figure.
- Label tables: Figure 1, Table 1, etc.
- When labeling figures, tables, slides, modules, chapters, etc., use numerals: Slide 3 instead of Slide Three.
- Use numerals with the percent sign (%) in tables, charts and graphs.
- Abbreviations, acronyms and brevity codes are acceptable in tables, charts and graphs only if space is an issue, but not on first mention. Ideally, the term is spelled out prior to the table, chart or graph if the abbreviation, acronym or brevity code appears in the table, chart or graph. For example, spell out Defense Department on first reference, then use DOD.

## Point of View

The type of writing you are doing will determine the appropriate point of view for your work. See the guidelines below:

- Generally, content for Military Community and Family Policy communication products should be in second person: *You should contact the Family Advocacy Program if you have concerns regarding domestic abuse involving active-duty service members.*
- Write blogs using the first person point of view: *I want to describe my life as a military spouse.*
- Use direct language. Avoid passive voice construction.
- Depending on the product and the target audience, first or third person may be appropriate in limited circumstances, for certain guides, Military OneSource articles and educational, promotional, or training materials. Be sure to address this with the project supervisor prior to beginning content development.

## Writing for Social Media

Writing for social media platforms — such as Facebook, Instagram, X and YouTube — requires a specialized style of writing. Short, direct sentences are essential. Audiences must easily and instantly understand messages. The social media environment is noisy. Our messages must cut through the noise, or they will be lost.

- Use the Military OneSource branding "Your Military OneSource Team" when communicating to the public.
- Be platform specific. The copy for a social post should get people's attention, make sense for the platform it's on and include a call to action.

- Use active language. An active voice and action verbs will make sure your copy is direct and clear to your audience.
- Use your text and headlines to lead your reader. The headlines and copy of a social post should work together.
- Lead social posts with a call to action when possible. Depending on your post, this may include requests to click on a link, comment on the post or take a different specific action.
- Don't be afraid of abbreviations, symbols and a conversational tone. Abbreviations are appropriate and acceptable in titles. Social media is more casual in nature; therefore, a light, friendly, conversational tone is appropriate. The use of symbols such as the hashtag (#) and percent sign (%) is consistent with quick communication in social media.
- Do not use "please" in social posts for Military Community and Family Policy social platforms. For example, **do not say:** *Please visit MilitaryINSTALLATIONS when planning your next move.* Instead, **say:***Visit MilitaryINSTALLATIONS when planning your next move.* However, "please" is acceptable in blogs and correspondence, as appropriate. Outreach Operations must approve all other exceptions.
- Avoid using exclamation points. **Note:** Exclamation points can be used for "hooah!" (Army), "oorah!" (Marines), "ooyah!" (Coast Guard) and other known military exclamations.

Below are some examples of lingo, emoji and hashtags we use to communicate with the military audience.

**Resilience and strength**:

**Topic-based or awareness days**:

**Emotion and lifestyle**:

**Avoid emoji that are inappropriate or imply the appearance of vulgarity or impropriety. For example:**

**Examples of military lingo**:

- Time for some mandatory fun.
- OCONUS PCS? No sweat. We've got your six.
- 15 minutes prior to 15 minutes prior. It's never too early to start planning for …
- On the double
- Stay strong on the homefront.

- Operation file taxes
- Battle buddy
- Rack (bed)
- Rack time (sleeping)
- DFAC or Chow Hall (food)
- Top (first sergeant)
- Hooah! (Army), oorah! (Marines), ooyah! (Coast Guard)
- Oscar-Mike (on the move)
- As you were (return to what you were doing)

**Military OneSource and product hashtags**:

- #MilitaryOneSource (never #Military1Source), #BlogBrigade, #LoveEveryDay

**Military community and events hashtags:**

- #MilitaryLife, #MilLife, #Military, #ArmedForces, #LoveFromHome, #MilBox, #MilitaryMonday, #RedFriday, #SupportOurTroops

**Military family hashtags:**

- #MilSpouse(s), #MilitarySpouse(s), #[Branch Name]Spouse(s), #MilFam, #MilKid(s), #MilParent
- #Army, #MarineCorps, #Navy, #AirForce, #USSF, #NationalGuard, #USMC, #Marines, #SemperFi, #Veterans
- #VeteransDay, #DayoftheDeployed, #MemorialDay, #FourthofJuly, #VeteranWife, #VetVerify, #AskRobyn, #MilitaryFamilyMonth

**Jobs and job search hashtags**:

- #Hiring, #TweetMyJobs, #HR, #JobOpening, #Employment, #Recruiting, #JobSearch, #JobListing, #HireMe, #LinkedIn, #Resume, #CV, #JobTips, #Career, #HotJobs, #Job, #HomeBusiness, #Entrepreneur, #WomenOwned, #MyVetBiz (Small Business Administration), #SmallBiz

**Education hashtags:**

- #Education, #College, #Tuition, #BacktoSchool

**Health and lifestyle hashtags:**

- #LifeHack, #AttitudeofGratitude, #PayitForward, #Kindness, #StressBusters, #Stress, #SpecialNeeds, #Nutrition, #Blogger, #HealthyParenting, #Parenting, #MilParenting

**Financial hashtags:**

- #Money, #Savings, #Finances

**Moving and housing hashtags:**

- #MilMove, #PCS, #Deployment, #DeploymentTips, #PCS, #PCSing, #MilitaryRelocation, #Moving

**Recreation and travel hashtags:**

- #MWR, #SpaceATravel, #MilitaryTravel, #Travel, #DODMWRLibraries

**Finally, here is an extensive list of social media-friendly military terms**:

- **activation:** Order to active duty (other than for training)
- **active duty:** Full-time duty in the active military service — includes members of the reserve components serving on active duty or full-time training duty, but does not include National Guard duty
- **advance force, advance guard:** Small force sent ahead for reconnaissance, minesweeping, preliminary site seizure, air support, etc.
- **check:** Term meaning "yes," "affirmative" or "I agree"
- **chit:** Any piece of paper authorizing something
- **commission:** To put in or make ready for service or use, as to commission an aircraft or ship; a written order giving a person rank and authority as an officer in the armed forces; or the rank and the authority such an order gives
- **deployment:** Leaving the normally assigned duty area, usually as a unit, to temporarily serve in another area
- **exercise:** Military maneuver or simulated wartime operation involving planning, preparation and execution for the purpose of training and evaluation
- **expedition:** A military operation an armed force conducts to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country
- **fall in:** To assemble in formation
- **forward observer:** An observer operating with frontline troops and trained to adjust ground or naval gunfire and pass back battlefield information
- **forward operating base:** An airfield the military uses to support tactical operations without establishing full support facilities. Use may occur for an extended time period. A main operating base must provide backup support for a forward operating base.
- **forward operating location:** Similar to a forward operating base but without the in-place infrastructure, primarily used for counter-drug operations
- **friendly:** A contact with positive identification as friendly
- **general orders:** Permanent instructions, issued in order form, that apply to all members of a command, as compared with special orders, which affect only individuals or small groups; general orders usually concern matters of policy or administration
- **situation report/SITREP:** A report giving the situation in the area of a reporting unit or formation
- **special operations:** Operations by specially organized, trained and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic or informational objectives by unconventional military

means in hostile, denied or politically sensitive areas. These ops differ from conventional ops in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and assets.

- **task force:** A temporary or semipermanent grouping of units, under one commander, to conduct a specific operation or mission
- **theater of operations:** a subarea within a theater of war defined by the geographic combatant commander required to conduct or support specific combat ops. Different theaters of operations within the same theater of war will normally be geographically separate and focus on different enemy forces. Theaters of operations are usually of significant size, allowing for ops over extended periods of time.
- **troops:** A collective term for uniformed military personnel, usually not applicable to naval personnel afloat
- **alpha unit:** Marine's spouse
- **blast:** The first parachute jump after parachutist jump school
- **cherry blast:** The sixth jump a parachutist makes after jump school
- **master blaster:** Parachutist with master parachutist badge
- **Hollywood blast:** A parachute jump for pay purposes
- **check six:** Look directly behind you; twelve o'clock means directly in front
- **exercise the landing gear:** To walk
- **eyewash:** Superficial improvements or additions
- **hop:** A mission or flight

## Program Content Guides

Program content guides are available for each program area. They contain guidelines, preferred language and terms, and relevant glossaries for content developers and editors. Select the program name below to access its content guide.

- Casualty, Mortuary Affairs and Military Funeral Honors
- Chaplains
- Child and Youth Advocacy
- Child and Youth Programs
- Counseling Through Military OneSource and Military Family Life Counseling Programs
- Crisis and Prevention
- Defense Suicide Prevention Office
- Defense-State Liaison Office
- Deployment Assistance

- Family Advocacy
- K-12 Education
- Legal Assistance
- MilLife Learning
- Military Family Readiness Program
- MilTax Tax Service
- Morale, Welfare and Recreation, and Resale Policy
- Office of Special Needs
- Personal Financial Management
- Personal Property Office – USTRANSCOM
- Relocation Assistance
- Sexual Assault
- Specialty Consultations
- Spouse Education and Career Opportunities
- Voluntary Education
- Wounded Warrior

# Branding and Logos for MC&FP and Support Programs

In fulfilling its mission to contribute to force readiness, Military Community and Family Policy provides quality of life programs that advance the well-being of the military community. Military OneSource plays a critical role in fulfilling that mission. It does this by providing a continuum of support and connecting service members and families to the resources and benefits they need to live their best MilLife.

Approved versions of MC&FP branding and program logos are available here along with complete instructions for using them. Users must meet the guidance this section of the MC&FP Style Guide provides.

## MC&FP Mission Statement

Quality of life policies and programs that help our service members, their families and survivors be well and mission ready.

## Communicating the Mission Through Our Brand Voice

Brand voice is the style of language MC&FP uses to communicate Military OneSource's mission to the military community. For the brand voice to be effective, we need to express it in clear, consistent language that the people we are talking to can easily understand, whether it is service members or their families.

Military OneSource's brand voice is:

- Knowledgeable

- Confident
- Conversational
- Positive
- Empowering
- Understanding
- Supportive

This brand voice assures our audience members that they can count on us to help them succeed in their careers and personal lives. It is in our promise to the military community:

- To be the ONE SOURCE that stands ready to assist as you master military life
- To give you expert support and information that is always true
- To be there, day and night, wherever you are, when you need a trusted voice, private and confidential
- To have answers you can depend on in pursuit of your best goals and your best MilLife

## Visual Style Guides for MC&FP and Support Programs

Visual style guides help define how to properly use logos and which fonts and colors to adopt in designed products and communication. Having a consistent brand helps build trust and instant recognition with our audience.

Make sure you've clearly identified whether the work you're doing should have MC&FP branding or that of one of its support programs. That will help you determine which style guide(s) and logo(s) to use. In most cases, public facing communication should be from the Military OneSource brand. If you're not sure, check with your government contact to specify which visual and written styles to follow.

Choose imagery for MC&FP content that reflects the armed forces and the U.S. population as a whole. This includes:

- People of different races, ethnicities, abilities, ages and body sizes
- Representations of different celebrations and traditions
- A variety of couples with and without families
- Families with different structures (grandparents raising children, single parents, etc.)
- Families whose members are of different races or ethnicities
- Partners/spouses who are of different races or ethnicities

View MC&FP Visual Style Guides »

## Logos for MC&FP and Support Programs

MC&FP and its program logos are official graphical identifiers for exclusive use on official products, websites, reports, etc. Therefore, make sure to use logos with care, and refer to the visual style guides for information

regarding the appropriate use of each. MC&FP staff may use all logos. If you have questions about the artwork or its use, submit them via our support system.

Of note, **the Defense Department logo and seal are not interchangeable.** Follow these usage guidelines:

- The DOD logo may be used, in keeping with brand standards, in all DOD communications across all media platforms.
- The DOD seal has very restricted usage. The DOD seal's use is restricted to official DOD top leader correspondence, legal documents, reports, memoranda, ceremonial booklets, certificates and awards.
- The DOD and military seals may not be used on flyers or other promotional materials. These seals may be used only by the military departments for official purposes.

To prevent the perception of a DOD endorsement, the logos and seals are not available for use outside the department. Where there is a partnership agreement, use of the logo must be by permission when the Office of General Counsel and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) allow it.

For more information, consult the DOD logo and DOD seal usage guidelines.View MC&FP Logos »

## Visual Style Guides

The visual identity of Military Community and Family Policy programs is the outward expression of MC&FP. Each MC&FP program has a unique and distinctive set of visual logos, colors and usage that sets it apart from other organizations and programs. See each program's visual style guide for more information to build a cohesive brand by using consistent colors and fonts and correct logo placement.

Make sure you've clearly identified whether the work you're doing should have MC&FP branding or that of one of its support programs. That will help you determine which style guide(s) and logo(s) to use. If you're not sure, check with your government contact about which visual and written styles to follow.

View All MC&FP Visual Style Guides »

## MC&FP Logo Usage Guide

### Military Community and Family Policy

MC&FP is directly responsible for programs and policies for service members and their families. When in doubt, follow the visual guidance on fonts, colors and logo usage for MC&FP.

## Program-Specific Visual Style Guides

## Military OneSource

These guides contain important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to Military OneSource and the MilitaryOneSource.mil website.

For website CSS and user interface:

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## DOW Logo and Seal Usage Guide

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using the DOW logo and how the DOW seal is no longer used in combination with the Military OneSource logo or on promotional products. Visit War.gov for the complete War Department Brand Guide.

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## Educational and Developmental Intervention Services

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to the Educational and Developmental Intervention Services Program.

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## Exceptional Family Member Program

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to EFMP.

EFMP&ME
Your Partner in Exceptional Family Support

## EFMP & Me

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to the EFMP & Me website.

Military Community Advocacy Directorate

Family Advocacy PROGRAM

New Parent Support PROGRAM

## Military Community Advocacy Directorate

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using or referencing the MCAD's Family Advocacy and New Parent Support programs.

MILITARY IN LASTING TRIBUTE

## Military In Lasting Tribute

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to the Military In Lasting Tribute website.

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MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

## MilitaryINSTALLATIONS

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to the MilitaryINSTALLATIONS website.

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MILITARY STATE POLICY SOURCE

## Military State Policy Source

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to Military State Policy Source.

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MILITARY ONE SOURCE | MilLife LEARNING

## MilLife Learning

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to MilLife Learning.

PLAN MY MOVE

### Plan My Move

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to Plan My Move.

SpouseWorks

### SpouseWorks

This guide contains important brand usage information, guidelines and policies for using, referencing or linking to SpouseWorks.

## MC&FP Program Logos

Logos for Military Community and Family Policy programs will post here as they become available. Refer to the Visual Style Guide PDFs for information about logo file types and their appropriate use. If you have questions about the artwork or its appropriate use, submit them via our **support function**.

EFMP Exceptional Family Member Program

| **Exceptional Family Member Program** |
|---|
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |

JPG/JPEG:

GIF:

All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/EFMP/EFMP-Logos.zip

MILITARY STATE POLICY SOURCE

**Military State Policy Source**

*Downloadable Versions:*

PNG

JPG/JPEG:

GIF:

All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Style%20Guide/msps-logos.zip

SpouseWorks

| **Spouse Employment and Career Opportunities** |
|---|
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

| All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Portal/Program_logos/SECO-Logos.zip |
|---|

MILITARY ONESOURCE | MilLife LEARNING

| **MilLife Learning** |
|---|
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Portal/Program_logos/MilLifeLearning-Logos.zip

MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

**MilitaryINSTALLATIONS**

*Downloadable Versions:*

PNG

JPG/JPEG:

GIF:

All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Style%20Guide/military-installations-logos.zip

PLAN MY MOVE

| **Plan My Move** |
| --- |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

| All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Style%20Guide/pmm-logos.zip |
| --- |

EFMP & ME
Your Partner in Exceptional Family Support

| **EFMP & Me** |
| --- |
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| Branding Logo Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |

JPG/JPEG:

GIF:

All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/EFMP/EFMP-and-Me-Logos.zip

**Plan My Deployment**

*Downloadable Versions:*

| **Military & Family Life Counselor Program** |
| --- |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

| All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Portal/Program_logos/MFLC-Logos.zip |
| --- |
| |

| **Military OneSource** |
| --- |
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| Website Visual Style Guide: PDF |

| |
|---|
| Branding Logo Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

| |
|---|
| All Versions: Zipped Archive https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Portal/Program_logos/Military-OneSource-logos.zip |

| **Military OneSource Alternate** |
|---|
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| Website Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| Branding Logo Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

| |
|---|
| All Versions: Zipped Archive<br>https://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Portal/Program_logos/Military_OneSource_stacked_logos.zip |
| |

| |
|---|
| **Military Spouse Employment Partnership** |
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

All Versions: Zipped Archive
https://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Portal/Program_logos/MSEP_logos.zip

| **MyCAA** |
| --- |
| Visual Style Guide: PDF |
| *Downloadable Versions:* |
| PNG |
| JPG/JPEG: |
| GIF: |

All Versions: Zipped Archive
https://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Portal/Program_logos/MyCAA_logos.zip

## Approval Process

Military Community and Family Policy is a diverse organization with multiple offices and support staff across the globe. That means there is a strong reliance on electronic means of communication for development and review of routine documents, online content, print products, and electronic newsletters and publications. When submitting a document for review, ensure that it meets all requirements in this online style guide and use the following naming convention when saving a file:

- Name of file

- Date
- Initials of staff member submitting document
- example: *MYOM-Parenting-20Aug2010-LS.doc*

Some files will go into a database and be linked from online sources, so limit file names to the following:

- Letters
- Numbers
- Dashes (use in place of spaces)
- Underscores (use in place of spaces)
- Periods

You may submit any documents for official MC&FP policy or program review via the **Tasking Assignments and Reporting system**. When submitting documents in the TAR, follow all naming conventions above. If spaces remain in a file name, a %20 will appear in each space when you save the file. This will cause your file name to appear as *MOS%20versionDahlgren%2015Aug2020.pdf*

By adding an underscore to each space, no additional characters will appear in the file name once you save it. This ensures the file will correctly open, once it uploads to the database and incorporates into a hyperlink, as *MOS_versionDahlgren_15Aug2020.pdf*.

Visit the **Military OneSource media page** for information on the review process if you are outside MC&FP. You may also submit questions via our **customer support system**.

## MC&FP Websites

When developing content for Military Community and Family Policy websites and applications, there is an additional set of guidelines to follow. Web writers should follow style guidelines for general MC&FP writing. They should also note the following suggestions for using hyperlinks and URLs and writing appropriately for the web.

It is important to be aware of the standards and guidelines for URL approval. Not all URLs are acceptable. Follow the guidelines below:

- If a URL ends in .gov or .mil, you can use it in your writing.
- If a URL does not end in one of the approved endings above, ask yourself: Is this link required to fulfill the mission and intended purpose of this document? If the answer is no, do not use the link. If the answer is yes, you can check to see if the link has been previously approved. If not, you will have to submit the link for approval before using it.
- Please note that all URLs that do not meet the criteria above must go through the link vetting process. You can submit a link via the **Link Vetting Application**.
- Please note when using URLs that do not end in .gov or .mil, MC&FP is prohibited by Defense Department policy from actions which would be perceived as the Defense Department offering endorsement of or preferential treatment to a non-government organization, agency or program.

- If the URL does not end in the .gov or .mil approved endings, consider providing the necessary information without directly linking to the site.

## Creating Hyperlinks

A hyperlink is a word or phrase in an electronic document that, when clicked, takes the reader to another page or document on the internet with related content. When using and creating hyperlinks, follow these guidelines:

- Unless otherwise directed, writers should link to only federal, state or service websites — .gov or .mil addresses.
- Embed a hyperlink within concise, descriptive text rather than writing out the complete URL in the text. This enables a screen reader user to easily understand where the link leads without waiting for the reader to pronounce every character of a URL.
    - **Correct:** The National Domestic Violence Hotline is a web resource and 24-hour help line for survivors of domestic violence.
    - **Incorrect:** The https://www.thehotline.org/ website is a web resource and 24-hour help line for survivors of domestic violence.
- When creating a hyperlink, do not link single words. A user may overlook the link. Hyperlink several words or an entire phrase when possible. The linked text should be concise yet descriptive. Avoid nondescript link text such as "click here." Avoid linking to excessively long text or sentences. Longer links are more likely to break across lines and cause difficulty for the reader.
    - **Ideal (concise and descriptive):** Check out the Preparing for Your Move fact sheet for more information.
    - **Not ideal (too long):**You can find more information by accessing the Preparing for Your Move fact sheet on Military OneSource.
    - **Not ideal (nondescript):**Click here for more information about moving.
- Writers contributing content for MC&FP websites and applications will most often use hyperlinks when referencing Defense Department or military service policies and regulations, or when they want to direct the reader to another resource, such as another website.
- Do not use links to content that has no government origin or is in the public domain. Nongovernmental resources may be acceptable for use in rare circumstances and must have permission of the author or publisher.
    - In addition, prior to posting, the content use must receive approval from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs); in some instances, approval by the Defense Department's Office of General Counsel is necessary.
- When hyperlinking email addresses, write out the full email address and hyperlink the entire address *if the email address does not contain personally identifiable information*.
    - **Correct:** 97AMW.PA@us.af.mil
    - **Incorrect (does not indicate that the text contains an email address):** Air Mobility Wing

For more information on MC&FP link policy, visit Military OneSource.

Follow these steps to create a hyperlink in Microsoft Word documents:

1. Highlight the text that will become the hyperlink.
2. Right click on your mouse and select "Link" from the menu that appears (or use the keystrokes Ctrl and K to pull up the "Insert Hyperlink" option).
3. A window labeled "Insert Hyperlink" will appear on the screen with an address box at the bottom in which you can enter the URL (web address) for the hyperlink.
4. Either type or copy and paste the URL directly from the website into the address box in the "Insert Hyperlink" window.
5. Once you enter the complete URL in the box, click "OK" at the bottom of the "Insert Hyperlink" window.
6. The hyperlink text should now appear in underlined blue font in the document.
7. Click on the hyperlink to confirm that it directs the reader to the correct webpage or document.

# Use of Shortcut URLs

While all webpages on Military OneSource have an absolute URL, some pages also have shortcut URLs, also known as vanity URLs. These URLs are shorter versions that redirect to the full, absolute URL.

The purpose of the shortcut URL is to make it quick and easy for users to type the URL into their browser or for a contact center representative to read a URL to the user over the phone. This is in contrast to a full- length absolute URL that contains folders and paths, representing the location in which the page lives on the website.

Users who type in a shortcut URL may notice their browser will be redirected to the absolute URL where the content resides within a website or application so they can access the most current information; for example, the shortcut URL **www.militaryonesource.mil/pcs** redirects users to the destination URL **https://www.militaryonesource.mil/moving-pcs/plan-to-move/pcs-and-military-moves/**.

If a shortcut URL will change its destination regularly, for example to redirect to the newest eNewsletter online version, it should be a temporary 302 redirect URL. If the shortcut URL will likely always send to the same destination URL, such as an article, it should be a permanent 301 redirect URL. See below for examples of the different redirects.

## 302 Redirect:

- Military OneSource eNewsletter shortcut URL: **https://www.militaryonesource.mil/epublications**
- Military OneSource eNewsletter destination URL: **https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDODMILITARYONESOURCE/bulletins/1fa552b**

## 301 Redirect:

Typically, 301 redirects are used for expired pages, after URLs have moved, and when consolidating duplicate content. The 301 redirects also make sense to use for a shortcut URL that will always go to the same destination URL.

- MilTax vanity URL: https://www.militaryonesource.mil/miltax

- MilTax landing page absolute URL: https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/taxes/miltax-military-tax-services/

# About the Style Guide

Military Community and Family Policy is the Defense Department office that addresses quality of life issues to help service members and their families live their best military lives. MC&FP offers a suite of programs, tools and services — including Military OneSource — that connect those in the military community to resources they can use every day, from relocation planning and tax services to confidential counseling and spouse employment support.

This style guide is for those who develop communications and outreach content in support of MC&FP programs. Its purpose is to encourage consistent expression of the Military OneSource brand in look, feel and tone. This includes content developed for MC&FP websites and applications, ePublications, eLearning modules, social media, conference materials and print products (such as guides or brochures). All grammatical guidelines in this document follow those of The Associated Press Stylebook.

All creators of content for MC&FP must follow this style guide to ensure consistency across communication efforts. They must submit requests to the Office of Military Community Outreach if they seek permission to deviate from this guide. The guidance this style guide provides supersedes the AP Stylebook when there are differences between the two.

This guide is for the development of communication materials and content only and does not apply to writing issuances or official **Defense Department correspondence**.

Submit questions or comments about the content of this guide via **our support link.**

**Note:** Italics are used in this guide for emphasis only (except with respect to aircraft names; see the aircraft designations entry). The AP Stylebook does not allow the use of italics.

# Terms A-Z

# Use of Terms A-Z

Military Community and Family Policy writing guidance aligns with The Associated Press Stylebook with a few exceptions. Definitions of military-specific terms appear below, along with editorial guidance for certain commonly used words for MC&FP and our programs. See additional writing guidance in the **Writing Best Practices** section. Find program-specific guidance in the **Program Content Guides** section.

## A

**abbreviations, acronyms and brevity codes** – In general, avoid abbreviations, acronyms and brevity codes unless readers can easily recognize and understand them. Spell out on first reference* but do not follow with the abbreviation, acronym or brevity code in parentheses or set off by dashes. Abbreviations, acronyms and brevity codes are acceptable in subsequent references. **Note:** Never use abbreviations for Military Community and Family Policy program names unless otherwise noted in their program content guides. See Abbreviations, Acronyms and Brevity Codes for additional details.

An *abbreviation* is a shortened form of a word or phrase to represent the complete form: USMC (United States Marine Corps). Abbreviations differ from acronyms because users pronounce each individual letter.

An *acronym* is a word formed from the first letters of a series of words: scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus). An abbreviation is not an acronym.

A *brevity code* is a code that has as its sole purpose the shortening of messages for use in military and other communications: Divert (Proceed to alternate mission/base).

*The following commonly known abbreviations and acronyms are acceptable on first reference without introduction — including in headings, chapter titles and tables of contents — although there may be occasions when fully writing out the terms would be preferable:

- **AAFES** for Army and Air Force Exchange Service
- **CGX** for Coast Guard Exchange
- **CONUS** for continental United States
- **DEERS** for Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System
- **DIMS** for Defense Installation Messaging System (This acronym would appear only in documents and communications with installation DIMS managers.)
- **DoDEA** for Department of Defense Education Activity (When writing for new-to-the-military audiences, write out Department of Defense Education Activity early in the body copy for audience convenience. Note the use of lowercase "o" in this acronym, per the program's preference.)
- **EFMP** for Exceptional Family Member Program
- **ID or military ID** instead of "identification card" or "military identification card," respectively
- **JAG** for judge advocate general
- **LES** for Leave and Earnings Statement
- **MCX** for Marine Corps Exchange
- **MWR** for Morale, Welfare and Recreation
- **NEX** for Navy Exchange (use this term for the military community audience)
- **NEXCOM** for Navy Exchange Service Command (only use this term for internal reporting)
- **OCONUS** for outside the continental United States
- **PCS** for permanent change of station
- **PT or PRT** for physical training or physical readiness training
- **PTSD** for post-traumatic stress disorder
- **PX** for Post Exchange
- **Space-A** for space-available flights or travel program

**aboard vs. on board** – The terms mean nearly the same thing and in some uses are interchangeable. Aboard is the preferred usage. Use on board as two words but hyphenate as an adjective. *Aboard* means on board, on, in or into a ship. For example: *The crew is aboard the ship. An on-board medical team uses the on-board computer.*

**active component** – Lowercase.

**active duty, active-duty –** Lowercase in all references. As a noun, use two words: *Military personnel serve on active duty*. As an adjective, hyphenate: *All active-duty personnel must participate*. Do not hyphenate when the modifier is not already hyphenated in a cited title: *In the "2021 Active Duty Spouse Survey," PCS-related stress was reported as a significant factor*.

**Air Wing** – Two words.

**aircraft** – Acceptable characterization of military aviation platforms. Do not refer to military aircraft as airplanes or planes.

**aircraft designations** – Always use a letter (or letters) followed by a hyphen and number (or hyphen and number/letter combination): SH-60B. **Note:** For print publications, italicize the aircraft name (*Tomcat*, *Hornet*, etc.). For news service story submissions, use regular text (Tomcat, Hornet, etc.)

**aircraft squadrons** – Spell out the full name of the squadron on first reference. In subsequent references, abbreviate and hyphenate.

**aircrew, aircrew member** – One word in each instance, per Webster's.

**airman, airmen** – An individual who serves in the U.S. Air Force is an *airman*. The plural form is *airmen*. Lowercase in all uses.

**all hands, all-hands** – Two words as a noun: *He called all hands to the meeting*. Hyphenate as an adjective/compound modifier: *They attended the all-hands call*.

**allowances/pays** – Capitalize the various types of allowances and pays when referencing them in tables, running text or social media posts. For example: *Basic Allowance for Housing or Temporary Lodging Expense*.

**anchors aweigh** – Not anchors away.

**armed forces** – Capitalize only as a proper name (Armed Forces Day), as part of a title, or following U.S., as in U.S. Armed Forces. Lowercase as a noun (the armed forces) or adjective (an armed forces member).

## B

**battle group** – Do not use battle group. Instead, use "carrier strike group" or "expeditionary strike group."

**boot camp** – Use as two words.

**Boys & Girls Clubs of America** – Use "&" when writing out the full name of the organization. The name may also be shortened to Boys & Girls Clubs. Lowercase *club* or *clubs* when referring to individual events or programs. For example: *Each year, one exceptional club member is selected to be the National Youth of the Year*.

**building** – Lowercase the word in running text unless referring to a specific building with "building" in the proper name. Capitalize the word or abbreviation (Bldg.) when used in addresses.

**burial at sea** – Do not hyphenate.

## C

**call signs** – Do not refer to individuals by call signs. Use their full name and rank.

**carrier strike group** – Capitalize when using with the name of a ship. It is acceptable to precede the name of strike group with "the." *The Enterprise Carrier Strike Group arrived in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations Dec. 9.*

**Centcom** – Lowercase for all but the first letter is acceptable in headlines and in subsequent references to U.S. Central Command, a unified combatant command with headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

**chaplain** – Capitalize when using with a name, but lowercase in other uses. For military chaplains, the rank goes in parentheses in first-reference-with-name style: *Army Chaplain (Maj.) Joseph T. Smith*. Use a chaplain's religious affiliation only if it's relevant to the story.

**cities/datelines** – For cities that stand alone, use the list of datelines in the AP Stylebook. Because of their strong Navy ties and frequent reference in news stories, Great Lakes, Norfolk, San Diego and Pearl Harbor can stand alone, without states.

**civilian titles** – Use full name and title or job description on first reference. Capitalize the title or job description and do not use a comma to separate it from the individual's name when it comes first: *Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense John Smith attended the graduation ceremonies.* Lowercase and use commas when titles follow the name: *John Smith, deputy assistant secretary of defense, attended the graduation ceremonies*. **Exception:** For lower-third graphics in videos, webinars and social media posts**,** capitalize the initial letter of all words — except prepositions fewer than four letters, "to" when not an infinitive, coordinating conjunctions and articles (unless they are the first or last words in the header or title).

**coalition** – Do not capitalize: *U.S. and coalition forces took part in the event.*

**commander in chief** – Do not hyphenate. Once used both as the title for the president in the context of his authority over the armed forces and for commanders of the unified commands, it now applies only to the president. Use it only in context and not as a routine synonym for president. Applying the term to the president when he is acting in a nonmilitary capacity uses the term out of context. An example of using the term out of context: *The commander in chief asked Congress to ratify the treaty*. An example of using the term in context: *Using his authority as commander in chief, the president relieved the general of his command.*

**commanding officer** – Do not capitalize unless using as a title preceding a name: *Commanding Officer Capt. Tom Jones welcomed the distinguished visitors to the base. The commanding officer of the cruiser, Capt. Mary Smith, announced the ship would make a port visit to Key West, Florida.*

**composition titles** – Apply the guidelines listed here to Defense Department directives, instructions, manuals and service publications (for example, *JCS Pub 1, "Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States"*) as well as titles of articles, webinars, podcasts, books, computer games, movies, operas, plays, poems, albums and songs, radio and television programs, lectures, speeches and works of art.

The guidelines:

- Capitalize principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters.
- Capitalize articles — the, a, an — or words of fewer than four letters if they are the first or last word in a title.
- Put quotation marks around names of works that fall into the categories above. Exceptions include the Bible, reference materials — such as almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers and handbooks — and software titles, such as Windows.

**comradery** – Not camaraderie or comraderie.

**CONUS (continental U.S.) –** Refers to the 48 continental, or contiguous, states and the District of Columbia. It excludes Alaska and Hawaii. It is acceptable to use CONUS on first reference when writing for service members, families, service providers and leaders. If writing for an audience not as likely to be familiar with the term, for example the broad audience of the Friends & Family Connection eNewsletter, write it out fully upon first reference and use the acronym sparingly on subsequent references.

**counseling** – Confidential *counseling* is available through both Military OneSource and the Military and Family Life Counseling Program for prevention of the development or exacerbation of lifestyle conditions that may compromise military and family readiness. It addresses issues such as improving relationships at home and work, stress management, adjustment issues such as returning from a deployment, marital problems, parenting, grief and loss issues, and other military-related topics. Confidential counseling is short term and solution focused.

**couple** – Use *couple*, *partner* or *spouse* as the preferred wording. Use *spouse* when writing about programs available only to married spouses of service members. When referring to policy, use the official terminology.

When referring specifically to Defense Department policy, use the official term *domestic partner*.

**courtesy titles** – Refer to both men and women by first and last name, without courtesy titles, on first reference: *Susan Smith or Robert Smith*. Refer to both men and women by last name, without courtesy titles, in subsequent references. Use the courtesy titles Mr., Miss, Ms. or Mrs. only in direct quotations or after the first reference when a woman specifically requests it: Mrs. Smith or Ms. Smith. (Occasional exceptions may be made, to use courtesy titles on first and subsequent references for both men and women, for writing that requires utmost formality, such as speeches or remarks to Congress.) Also see *military titles*.

**crew member** – Use two words, consistent with service member.

**cutlines/photo captions** – Write in historical-present tense, identifying recognizable people left to right with full name and title. Include the date the photographer took the image, the location (city, state and country, if outside the U.S.) and what is happening. Use a colon at the beginning of the lead sentence or commas in the body of the sentence to indicate a person's relative position in the photo.

*Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, left, meets with Australian Defense Minister Stephen Smith during U.S.-Australia Ministerial Consultations in San Francisco, Sept. 15, 2011. U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Jacob N. Bailey.*

*Left to right: Army Staff Sgt. Eric Anton, Spc. Leigh Clarke and Col. David Thiele of the North Dakota National Guard judge a Memorial Day weekend duck-calling contest on Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, May 30, 2010. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Yoshauna Gunn.*

# D

**DeCA** – Acceptable for second and subsequent references to the Defense Commissary Agency. Note the lowercase "e" that is part of the acronym but doesn't stand for a separate word.

**Department of Defense/Defense Department** – "U.S. Department of Defense" and "Department of Defense" refer to the proper name and legal entity of this cabinet-level government department. Reserve these for use in formal and official correspondence, documents, reports and testimony. **In all other cases, use "Defense Department" on first reference.**

The correct acronym for "Defense Department" is "DOD," with an uppercase "O" in the center; use on second reference after "Defense Department," or when the stand-alone acronym suffices depending upon use. Do NOT use "DoD" except when otherwise directed.

**Department of Defense publications** – When referencing Department of Defense publications, including directives, instructions, manuals and service publications, cite the publication number and the document title. Put quotation marks around the title. For example: *JCS Pub 1, "Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States."* Also see composition titles.

**Department of Defense seal and logo use** – The Department of Defense seal and DOD logo are not interchangeable. Do NOT use the DOD seal, as it has restricted usage and is limited to official DOD leader correspondence, legal documents, reports, memoranda, ceremonial booklets, certificates and awards. There is no substitute for the DOD seal, and there is no optional graphic that represents the DOD.

Do NOT use service seals for products, as those seals have restricted usage limited to the individual services.

The DOD logo consists of the Pentagon icon and is typeset in Crimson Text Regular. It should be used for the majority of MC&FP and Military OneSource print and digital content. When applying the DOD logo to existing or new Military OneSource signatures (i.e., brand, properties and program marks), always position the DOD logo to the left.

For more information, consult the **DOD logo and DOD seal usage guidelines.**

**dependent** – Use *family member* unless usage is in conjunction with a formal description of military benefits.

**dial** – Use "dial" when asking the user to dial a number that requires pressing additional numbers for specific options after making the call: *Dial 800-xxx-xxxx, then select 1 for Independent Living Military OneSource services.*

Use "call" when asking the user to call a direct number that takes the user to the intended support service and does not require selecting any additional options once the call is made: *Call 800-xxx-xxxx.*

**DMDC** – Appropriate for all references to the organization formerly known as the Defense Manpower Data Center. Due to their broadening business, the agency shortened its name to DMDC.

**DoDEA** – Acceptable for first and subsequent references to Department of Defense Education Activity, including in headings, chapter titles and tables of contents. When writing for new-to-the-military audiences, write out Department of Defense Education Activity early in the body copy for audience convenience. Note the use of lowercase "o" in this acronym, per the program's preference.

**DODDS** – Acceptable for second and subsequent references to Department of Defense Dependents Schools. Note the plurals and lack of apostrophe. DODDS and DOD Dependents Schools refer to the school system. Use Defense Department dependents school or schools when referring to any of the system's schools in constructions that don't use a formal name.

**DOD MWR Libraries** – Formerly offered through Military OneSource as the MWR Digital Library, the updated DOD MWR Libraries reside at DODMWRLibraries.org. Because this is a service-wide integrated library, treat the title as a collective noun that takes a singular verb. Use *DOD MWR Libraries* on first reference, as this is the formal title. When referring to eResources, *the library, libraries or digital library* is acceptable on second and subsequent references.

**domestic partner** – Use *domestic partner* or *spouse* as the preferred wording. Use *spouse* when writing about programs available only to married spouses of service members. When referring to the policy, use the official terminology, *domestic partner*.

**Domestic Violence Prevention Month** – MC&FP's official name for this recognition.

## E

**e** – No hyphen for *eNewsletter*, *ePublication* and *eBlast*, according to Military OneSource style. When using hyphenated terms at the beginning of a sentence, capitalize the "e." *E-readers are now in use in schools.*

For nonhyphenated terms, do not capitalize the "e" at the beginning of a sentence: *eBlasts are scheduled to go out every Monday at 8 a.m. EST.*

**eBlast** – A term used in marketing to describe the distribution of electronic messages to a group of recipients. The preferred style is without the hyphen and with a capitalized "b" as written: *eBlast*. When used at the beginning of a sentence, do not capitalize the "e": *eBlasts are scheduled to go out every Monday at 8 a.m. EST.*

**eLearning** – The use of electronic media, information and communication technologies in education and instructional systems design. The preferred style is without the hyphen, *eLearning*.

**emergency room** – In the U.S.: *emergency room*; overseas: *emergency care facility*.

**eNews or eNewsletter** – Write as one word and do not hyphenate. (In most circumstances, eNews means "eNewsletter," not "electronic news." Avoid alternating between the two meanings within a document.)

**Exceptional Family Member Program** – This program supports military family members of all ages with special medical and educational needs. When referencing the three main components of the program, capitalize them to read *EFMP Family Support*, *EFMP Identification and Enrollment and EFMP Assignment Coordination. Always capitalize Exceptional Family Member Program* when writing it out fully in headers or running text. The abbreviation EFMP is acceptable in all references.

**exclamation point** – Avoid excessive exclamation points when developing content for MC&FP. This guidance applies to social media, blogs and other communication avenues. Do not use exclamation points when writing for Military OneSource unless they are part of a title (example: *Purple Up!*).

## F

**FAFSA –** Acronym for *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*, a form prospective college students complete to apply for financial aid. Spell out on first mention. Always use a noun after the acronym: *Filling out the FAFSA form early can prevent delays. Make sure you meet all FAFSA deadlines*. Include the registered trademark symbol (®) in the following circumstances:

- Any prominent mention, including titles, all headers and subheads and web features such as action cards or other callouts
- On first mention in running text: *Filling out the FAFSA® form early can prevent delays. Make sure you meet all FAFSA deadlines.*
- On first mention in subsequent sections of a piece of content with multiple sections

Be sure the registered trademark symbol is superscript: *FAFSA®*.

**Four-H Club** – *4-H Club* is preferred. Members are 4-H'ers.

**free** – Use *free* when the target audience is the military community, service members and family members. Free is easily understood and preferred when writing content for service and family members and service providers and should be used instead of *no cost*. However, there are two exceptions:

- When writing content for leaders pertaining to Military OneSource policy or the Military OneSource contract, use the term *no cost*.
- When writing for MilTax, use *free* or *no cost* as needed for the best way to convey the messaging. MilTax does not have restrictions on when to use *no cost versus free*. Review the MilTax Program Content Guide and the most current MilTax communication plan for more information.

## G

**Gold Star and Surviving Family Member Representative** – Always capitalize this when initially speaking about the representative. Use lowercase *representative* on second reference.

**Gold Star Lapel Button and the Next of Kin of Deceased Lapel Button** – Capitalize these button titles in all references. Note that the preferred term is button, not pin.

**Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day, Gold Star Spouses Day** – This is the correct way to write these observed recognition days.

**gold star survivors** – Lowercase *gold star* when describing these surviving family members. For example, do not capitalize *gold star parents*.

**guardian** – An individual who serves in the U.S. Space Force is a guardian. The plural form is guardians. Lowercase in all uses.

## H

**HON (abbreviation), The Honorable** – In the United States, government officials who have been elected to public office or are appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate are afforded the courtesy title of The Honorable. These positions include, but are not limited to, the President, Vice President, members of the Cabinet, Assistants to the President, Deputy Assistants to the President, Special Assistants to the President, deputy and undersecretaries of executive departments, assistant secretaries, American ambassadors, governors and mayors. Courtesy titles are not salutations and are used only in writing before the full name of a person. Additionally, it is custom in the United States for a person who has held the title of The Honorable to continue to be addressed as such after leaving a high-ranking position, unless they are removed from office or leave in disgrace.

**https** – When linking to approved content (e.g., a MilitaryOneSource.mil article), provide an https rather than http URL whenever possible, as https is more secure.

## I

**Individual Ready Reserve** – Uppercase.

**installation names** – In running text, fully write out the name of an installation to facilitate reader comprehension. For example, use McConnell Air Force Base on each reference as opposed to McConnell AFB. For the purposes of search engine optimization, installation names may include acronyms or be written out fully, whichever yields better search results, in URLs, metadata and in H1 for each installation page on the MilitaryINSTALLATIONS website.

# J

# K

# L

**life cycle** – Two words, not *lifecycle*.

**lists** – Use a colon after introductory text before a bulleted list. Lists should contain parallel structure. Capitalize the first word of the bulleted content, and finish with a period only if it is a complete sentence. Also, **see the lists section**.

**loan locker, lending locker, loan closet, lending closet** – When referring to this program or service in general, lowercase the term. Capitalize the term when referring to a specific program or service on a specific installation. For example: *Lending lockers (also known as loan lockers, or lending or loan closets) allow service and family members to borrow basic household goods while they await arrival of their own personal household goods after a PCS.*

An example of when you would capitalize the term: *The Marine Corps Base Quantico Loan Locker allows service members, family members and DOD civilians to borrow basic household items for up to 30 days while they await the arrival of their household goods.*

**Note:** The need to refer to installation-specific programs and services most commonly arises on the MilitaryINSTALLATIONS website.

# M

**Marine** – Capitalize references to U.S. forces: the U.S. Marines, the Marines, the Marine Corps. Do not use USMC. Uppercase when referring to a member of the U.S. Marines: *She met a fellow Marine.* Use "U.S." before service names only when the context is unclear without it.

**mental disorder** – Not mental condition.

**mental health** – Not behavioral health. Do not use interchangeably with behavioral health.

**midnight** – Do not put a 12 in front of it. It's the part of the day that is ending, not the one just beginning.

**Mil** – Abbreviation for "military" that is usually combined with other words to create customized terms such as MilLife, MilSpouse, MilKid, etc. Always capitalize the first letter of Mil and the first letter of the associated word.

**Military and Family Life Counseling Program** – Use this complete term and capitalize as shown when referring to the program. When referring to the counseling service or the individual counselors, lowercase: *You can learn more about military and family life counseling by visiting your Military and Family Support Center*.

**Military and Family Support Center** –Capitalize as shown.

**Military Community and Family Policy digital properties (or enclave or enterprise)** –These are all MC&FP websites, applications, assets and resources, including the MilitaryOneSource.mil online platform and website.

**Military Family Readiness System** – The Military Family Readiness System is the network of programs, services, people and agencies, and the collaboration among them, that promotes the readiness and quality of life of service members and their families. Capitalize this term in all uses.

**Military Funeral Honors Program** – Capitalize as shown when referring to the program, which establishes procedures for requesting and rendering military funeral honors.

**Military In Lasting Tribute** – Capitalize the first letter of each word in this title. Use Department of Defense (not Defense Department) when writing about this official online memorial. Note that this is referred to as an online memorial and not a digital memorial, website or application.

**military life, military lifestyle** – When referring to life as a military service or family member, use the preferred term *military life*. Avoid the term *military lifestyle* except in direct quotes.

**Military OneSource** – Always capitalize as shown. Never abbreviate as MOS; always write out the full name. This is the program, inclusive of the contact center, specialty consultations, confidential counseling and online platform.

**MilitaryOneSource.mil** – When referring to the website and not the program, use the URL and the term "site" or "website" when appropriate to do so. You may hyperlink or not hyperlink it, as appropriate. There are several acceptable ways to write the website address for printed or downloadable documents. These include:

- Uppercase and lowercase letters – **www.MilitaryOneSource.mil**
- All lowercase letters – **www.militaryonesource.mil**
- Without www – **MilitaryOneSource.mil** or **militaryonesource.mil**

**Military OneSource online platform** – This encompasses all websites, applications and resources that have MilitaryOneSource.mil in the URL, to include all eNewsletters and social media platforms.

**military service uniform** – As per Department of Military Affairs policy, uniform names should only be capitalized if you are using the formal name. For example: Army Combat Uniform "Scorpion" or Marine Corps Dress Blues. Informal names could be: combat uniform, service uniform, dress whites, summer whites, etc. For a directory of photographs of military service uniforms and their formal names, review this Military Service Uniform Guide.

**military titles** – Capitalize military rank only when using it as a formal title before a person's name. On first reference, use the appropriate title before the full name of the service member. In subsequent references, use only the last name. Spell out and lowercase a title when using in the place of a name: *Capt. James Smith gave the order. The general travels on Monday*. For plurals, add s to the principal element: *Majs. Smith and Jones*. The following are abbreviations, with ranks in descending order:

**ARMY**

Commissioned Officers

- general – Gen.
- lieutenant general – Lt. Gen.
- major general – Maj. Gen.
- brigadier general – Brig. Gen.
- colonel – Col.
- lieutenant colonel – Lt. Col.

- major – Maj.
- captain – Capt.
- first lieutenant – 1st Lt.
- second lieutenant – 2nd Lt.

Warrant Officers

- chief warrant officer five (CW5) – Chief Warrant Officer 5
- chief warrant officer four (CW4) – Chief Warrant Officer 4
- chief warrant officer three (CW3) – Chief Warrant Officer 3
- chief warrant officer two (CW2) – Chief Warrant Officer 2
- warrant officer (W01) – Warrant Officer

Officer Enlisted Personnel

- sergeant major of the Army – Sgt. Maj. of the Army
- command sergeant major – Command Sgt. Maj.
- sergeant major – Sgt. Maj.
- first sergeant – 1st Sgt.
- master sergeant – Master Sgt.
- sergeant first class – Sgt. 1st Class
- staff sergeant – Staff Sgt.
- sergeant – Sgt.
- corporal – Cpl.
- specialist – Spc.
- private first class – Pfc.
- private – Pvt.

**MARINE CORPS**

Commissioned officer ranks and abbreviations follow the same system as the Army. Warrant officer ratings follow the same system as the Navy. There are no specialist ratings.

Enlisted Personnel

- sergeant major of the Marine Corps – Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps
- sergeant major – Sgt. Maj.
- master gunnery sergeant – Master Gunnery Sgt.

- first sergeant – 1st Sgt.
- master sergeant – Master Sgt.
- gunnery sergeant – Gunnery Sgt.
- staff sergeant – Staff Sgt.
- sergeant – Sgt.
- corporal – Cpl.
- lance corporal – Lance Cpl.
- private first class – Pfc.
- private – Pvt.

**NAVY, COAST GUARD**

Commissioned Officers

- admiral – Adm.
- vice admiral – Vice Adm.
- rear admiral upper half – Rear Adm.
- rear admiral lower half – Rear Adm.
- captain – Capt.
- commander – Cmdr.
- lieutenant commander – Lt. Cmdr.
- lieutenant – Lt.
- lieutenant junior grade – Lt. j.g.
- ensign – Ensign

Warrant Officers

- chief warrant officer – Chief Warrant Officer

Officer Enlisted Personnel

- master chief petty officer of the Navy – Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
- master chief petty officer – Master Chief Petty Officer
- senior chief petty officer – Senior Chief Petty Officer
- chief petty officer – Chief Petty Officer
- petty officer first class – Petty Officer 1st Class
- petty officer second class – Petty Officer 2nd Class

- petty officer third class – Petty Officer 3rd Class
- seaman – Seaman
- seaman apprentice – Seaman Apprentice
- seaman recruit – Seaman Recruit

**AIR FORCE**

Commissioned officer ranks and abbreviations follow the same system as the Army. The Air Force does not have warrant officer ratings.

Enlisted Personnel

- chief master sergeant of the Air Force – Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force
- chief master sergeant – Chief Master Sgt.
- senior master sergeant – Senior Master Sgt.
- master sergeant – Master Sgt.
- technical sergeant – Tech. Sgt.
- staff sergeant – Staff Sgt.
- senior airman – Senior Airman
- airman first class – Airman 1st Class
- airman – Airman
- airman basic – Airman

**SPACE FORCE**

Space Force members are referred to as guardians. Commissioned officer ranks and abbreviations follow the same system as the Army. The Space Force does not have warrant officer ratings.

Enlisted Personnel

- chief master sergeant of the Space Force – Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force
- command chief master sergeant of the Space Force – Command Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force
- chief master sergeant – Chief Master Sgt.
- senior master sergeant – Senior Master Sgt.
- master sergeant – Master Sgt.
- technical sergeant – Tech. Sgt.
- sergeant – Sgt.
- specialist 4 – Specialist (preferred term); Specialist 4 (also acceptable)
- specialist 3 – Specialist (preferred term); Specialist 3 (also acceptable)

- specialist 2 – Specialist (preferred term); Specialist 2 (also acceptable)
- specialist 1 – Specialist (preferred term); Specialist 1 (also acceptable)

**retired officers** – Use a military rank on first reference before the name of an officer who has retired if it is relevant. Do not use the military abbreviation "Ret." Spell out "retired" and use it in the same way as it would appear before a civilian title: *They asked retired Army Gen. Robert Jones to speak.*

**firefighters, police officers** – Use the abbreviations in this section when using military-style titles before the name of a firefighter or police officer outside a direct quote. Add *police* or *fire* before the title as needed for clarity: *police Sgt. Wendy Smith*, *fire Capt. Lee Williams*. Spell out titles such as *detective* that do not appear in the lists for armed forces.

**military treatment facility** – Use this term instead of medical treatment facility.

**more than/over** – Use *more than* instead of *over* to indicate greater numerical value: *Paychecks went up more than $100 per week*.

**My Military OneSource** – This is the appropriate way to refer to the Military OneSource application.

## N

**National Guardsman** – When referring to an individual in a National Guard unit, use *National Guardsman*. Lowercase *guardsman* when it stands alone.

**Navy** – Capitalize references to U.S. forces: the U.S. Navy, the Navy, Navy policy. Do not use USN. Lowercase when referring to naval forces of other nations: *the French navy*. Use "U.S." before service names only when the context is unclear without it.

**no cost** – Use this term only when communicating to a leadership audience about Military OneSource services for eligible individuals — specifically, when writing content for leaders pertaining to Military OneSource policy or the Military OneSource contract. Hyphenate when using as an adjective: *no-cost services*. When writing about Military OneSource services for service and family members and service providers, use the term *free*. When writing for MilTax, use *free* or *no cost* as needed for the best way to convey the messaging. MilTax does not have restrictions on when to use *no cost versus free*. Review the MilTax Program Content Guide and the most current MilTax communication plan for more information.

**nonappropriated** –No hyphen. This is usually paired with *funds — nonappropriated funds*, or *NAF*, meaning funds that are not appropriated by Congress (e.g., some funds related to MWR, resale and commissaries).

## O

**OCONUS (outside the continental U.S.)** – Refers to any place outside the 48 continental, or contiguous, states and the District of Columbia. It includes Alaska and Hawaii. **Note:** Use the phrase "living abroad" interchangeably with OCONUS for a plain language approach.

**offices and centers** – When referring to an installation office or center, such as a legal office or child development center, lowercase the term when using it in a general sense. Capitalize the term when referring to a specific office or center on a specific installation. For an example of using the lowercase term: *Child development centers generally offer child care for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.* For an example where you would capitalize the term: *The Fort Bragg Legal Office is open every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through*

*Friday*.**Note:** The need to refer to installation-specific offices and centers most commonly arises on the MilitaryINSTALLATIONS website.

**order of precedence for the military services** – Use this order:

- Army
- Marine Corps
- Navy
- Air Force
- Space Force
- Coast Guard
- Army National Guard
- Army Reserve
- Navy Reserve
- Marine Corps Reserve
- Air National Guard
- Air Force Reserve
- Coast Guard Reserve
- Defense Department service provider
- Defense Department Expeditionary Civilian workforce

When referring to the National Guard and the reserves together, the National Guard comes first.

Use "U.S." before service names only when the context is unclear without it.

**ordinal numbers** – Ordinal numbers indicate order. Spell out first through ninth and then use figures: first, third, 10th, 101st. Ordinal numbers should **not** be superscript; the font size of the letters should match the font size of the number. Correct: *10th*. Incorrect: *10$^{th}$*.

**over/more than** – "Over" generally refers to spatial relationships, as opposed to "more than," which is used to indicate greater numerical value. *The plane flew over the city. Pay went up more than $100.*

**overseas** – Refers to anywhere other than the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The term includes U.S. territories and possessions, and foreign countries. When referring to foreign countries, MC&FP describes them as "outside of the United States and outside of the U.S. territories and possessions."

## P

**page numbers** –Follow AP guidelines but note one exception: *It's a Page One story*.

**Pay grades** – Use "grade" to designate pay grade. Use "rank" to refer to the order of precedence or seniority within a grade. Examples: E-1 through E-9 (enlisted pay grades); W-1 through W-5 (warrant officer pay grades);

O-1E through O-3E (commissioned officer with over four years of active-duty enlisted and/or warrant officer service pay grades); O-1 through O-10 (commissioned officer pay grades).

**PCS (permanent change of station)** – Acceptable on first reference when writing for service members, families, service providers and leaders. Also acceptable in verb form, such as *PCSed and PCSing*. If writing for an audience not as likely to be familiar with the term, for example the broad audience of the Friends & Family Connection eNewsletter, spell it out on first reference and use the acronym sparingly on subsequent references.

**please** – Do not use "please" in content for Military Community and Family Policy digital properties, including websites, applications and social platforms. This includes website articles, collateral material and social posts. For example, do not say: *Please visit MilitaryINSTALLATIONS when planning your next move.* Instead, say: *Visit MilitaryINSTALLATIONS when planning your next move.* "Please" is acceptable, however, in blogs and correspondence, as appropriate. Outreach Operations must approve all other exceptions.

**podcasts** – Capitalize "podcast" when it is part of the title of a podcast, such as *Military OneSource Podcast* or *the Office of Special Needs EFMP Podcast series*. Lowercase when used in a general context.

**post-traumatic stress disorder** – Always lowercase and hyphenate except if written differently as part of a proper name. For example: *National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*.

**president** – Use the first and family name on first reference; use only the last name in subsequent references.

**preventive** – Never preventative.

**primary care manager** – Lowercase this term. It refers to an assigned health care professional who provides all routine, nonemergency and urgent health care to those enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Young Adult Prime. Use the acronym PCM in subsequent references.

**primary care provider** – Lowercase this term. It refers to an assigned health care professional who provides all routine, nonemergency and urgent health care to those enrolled in the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan, also known as the US Family Health Plan. Note that "US" stands for "Uniformed Services" in this context.

**privacy** – Do not identify juveniles under the age of 18 who are accused of crime, even if the news media has done so. Do not identify, through text or images, juveniles who have been witnesses to crimes. Do not identify, through text or images, those who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they voluntarily identify themselves. There may be exceptions in extraordinary cases. For imagery guidelines, consult with MCO Outreach Operations staff.

**privately owned vehicle** – Always lowercase and never hyphenate this term. POV is acceptable on second reference (so long as it will not be confused with "point of view" within the context of the story).

# Q

# R

**reserve** – Lowercase.

- Individual Ready Reserve – Uppercase.
- ready reserve – Lowercase.

- reserve component – Refers to all reserve forces of the United States, including the National Guard (and, technically, the ROTC, though this is rarely intended by the user/speaker). Lowercase. Example: *The reserve component faces a cut of more than $3.5 billion in the next federal budget*.
- reserve components – Refers to some combination of the reserves but not necessarily all of them. Specify the applicable components or otherwise use "reserve component" (singular) to refer to all the reserve forces.
- reservist – Lowercase.
- selected reserve – Lowercase.
- standby reserve – Lowercase.

## S

**sailor** – Use lowercase when referring to a member of the U.S. Navy.

**school liaison** – Use lowercase. Do not use the term *school liaison officer*.

**second lady or second gentleman –** As an exception to the AP Stylebook, capitalize *Second Lady* or *Second Gentleman* as a formal title when using it before a name. Lowercase in other uses.

**secretary of defense** – Capitalize as a formal title before a name. Lowercase in other uses. With regard to the secretary of defense under President Donald J. Trump, always use Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, not Peter Hegseth, per his preference. Do not use Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

**series** – Lowercase. This is sometimes used to describe podcast series that include the Military OneSource Podcast and the Office of Special Needs EFMP Podcast. Both podcasts have a series of episodes about a variety of military-life topics. *Example: Military OneSource Podcast series.*

**service affiliation** – As a general rule, put service affiliation before rank. Do not use when it is obvious: *Gen. John T. Smith, commander of the Air Force Space Command*. However, always use it for people in unified combatant commands – *Marine Corps Maj. John D. Smith, a U.S. Central Command spokesperson* – and in any other case where the affiliation would not be obvious to people with little knowledge of the military rank structure or the service in general. Use the service even with ranks used only in that service, such as lance corporal, gunnery sergeant, sergeant first class, etc. While the person's service affiliation would be obvious to people with that level of knowledge, MC&FP stories should be clear to any reader.

**service, services** – Lowercase all references to service or services. When referencing a specific military service, capitalize the term and use this order of precedence:

- Army
- Marine Corps
- Navy
- Air Force
- Space Force
- Coast Guard
- Army National Guard

- Army Reserve
- Navy Reserve
- Marine Corps Reserve
- Air National Guard
- Air Force Reserve
- Coast Guard Reserve
- Defense Department service provider
- Defense Department Expeditionary Civilian workforce
- When referring to the National Guard and the reserves together, the National Guard comes first.
- Use "U.S." before service names only when the context is unclear without it.

**serviceman, servicewoman, servicemen, servicewomen** – One word; use lowercase in all references, but *service member*.

**service member** – Written as two words, use lowercase in all references. One exception is if the term *servicemember* is part of an official title such as the *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act*, *Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance* or the *Office of Servicemember Affairs*.

**soldier** – Lowercase when referring to a member of the U.S. Army.

**Space Force** – Capitalize references to U.S. forces: the *U.S. Space Force*, the *Space Force*. Do not use USSF. Use this order of precedence for the Space Force: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard. Use "U.S." before service names only when the context is unclear without it. Space Force service members are referred to as *guardians*.

**special needs** – Use the phrase *family member with special needs* as opposed to special needs family member. The needs do not define the individual.

## T

**Taps** – As an exception to the AP Stylebook, uppercase without quotation marks for the bugle call sounded for lights out and at military funerals.

**TAPS** – An acronym for the military service organization, *Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors*.

**time change** – In 2025, daylight saving time starts Sunday, March 9, and ends Sunday, Nov. 2. On Sunday, March 9, at 2 a.m., clocks turn forward one hour to 3 a.m. During daylight saving time, use the following time zone abbreviations, as applicable: EDT, CDT, MDT, PDT. On Sunday, Nov. 2, at 2 a.m., clocks turn back one hour to 1 a.m., as local standard time (EST, CST, MST, PST). In 2026, daylight saving time will begin Sunday, March 8, and end Sunday, Nov. 1. In 2027, daylight saving time will begin Sunday, March 14, and end Sunday, Nov. 7.

**TRICARE** – TRICARE is the Defense Department's premier health care program, serving 9.6 million service members, retirees and their families around the world. It provides military health benefits and health care support to ensure mission readiness. Do not refer to TRICARE as *health insurance* since it is an entitlement. Instead, say *health benefit*.

**24/7** – Written as shown.

**Twitter; X** –On first and subsequent references, refer to the platform as X. The term tweet remains acceptable as a noun and a verb. Discontinue use of the blue bird logo and use the X logo instead.

## U

**Uniform Code of Military Justice** – Spell out on first reference, then use UCMJ.

**URL** – Acceptable in all references to Uniform Resource Locator. When the URL doesn't fit on one line, break it into two or more lines without a hyphen or other punctuation. In printed or downloaded documents, such as fact sheets, information cards, trifolds and other PDFs, use the complete URL including https:// or http://. The only exception to this rule is the URL for the Military OneSource website, which can be written in any of the following ways for printed or downloaded documents:

- Uppercase and lowercase letters — www.MilitaryOneSource.mil
- All lowercase letters — www.militaryonesource.mil
- Without www — MilitaryOneSource.mil or militaryonesource.mil

For printed or downloaded documents, always hyperlink the URL so it can be used for both web and print purposes.

Do not spell out URLs in emails where the URLs will be hyperlinked. Hyperlink a word or phrase in the paragraph similar to content in Military OneSource articles, as the URL will display after the hyperlinked text once the email has been sent. For example: *"Use **Plan My Move** to organize your next move"* will appear as *"Use Plan My Move https://planmymove.militaryonesource.mil/ to organize your next move"* once the email has been sent.

**U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Space Force, U.S. Coast Guard** – Also Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Space Force or Coast Guard. Capitalize in all uses when referring to U.S. forces.

**USTRANSCOM** – Acceptable for second and subsequent references when referring to the U.S. Transportation Command for internal audiences within the Defense Department. For public-facing products and on Military Community and Family Policy digital properties, refer to the Defense Personal Property Management Office or other appropriate specific resource. Do not use USTC in place of USTRANSCOM in client- and public-facing content.

## V

**veterans affairs** – Capitalize when referring to the *Department of Veterans Affairs* and use lowercase *veterans affairs* as a topic. VA is the accepted abbreviation for this department. Do not use VA as an abbreviation for veterans affairs in a general sense. Do not use an apostrophe in veterans affairs; however, singular vs. plural and apostrophe vs. no apostrophe is at the writer's discretion for other terms or phrases related to veterans.

**vice** – Use two words, *vice admiral*, *vice chairman*, *vice consul*. Capitalize in titles when using before a name.

**vice president** – Capitalize *vice president* only as a formal title before one or more names: *Vice President JD Vance*, *former Vice President Kamala Harris*, *former Vice Presidents Mike Pence and Dan Quayle*. Use lowercase in all other references: *The vice president said today that he is running for president*. Use the first and last name on the first reference; in subsequent references, use only the last name.

# W

**Washington, D.C.** – Never abbreviate Washington when referring to the nation's capital. Use Washington, D.C., or District of Columbia when the context requires distinction between the state and federal district. Use periods in *D.C.* Use *DC* only in a postal address.

**Washington (state)** – Specify *Washington state* or *state of Washington* (or some variation) on first reference if there is a chance readers could confuse the state with Washington, D.C.

**weapons** – Contrary to the AP Stylebook, gun is NOT an acceptable term for any firearm. In military parlance, the word gun refers to artillery. Use the specific form: rifle, pistol, mortar, artillery, etc. See the AP Stylebook for treatment and definitions for all other weaponry terms.

**web** – In general, do not hyphenate or separate compound words containing *"web": webcam*, *webcast*, *webfeed*, *webmaster*, *webpage*, *website*. But: *web address*, *web browser*.

**web address** – If a web address is at the end of a sentence, follow it with a period.

**wife, husband** – Use *partner* or *spouse* as the preferred wording. Use *spouse* when writing about programs available only to married spouses of service members. When referring to policy, use the official terminology, *spouse* or *marriage*.

**with** – Capitalize in a heading or title.

**women** – Women should receive the same treatment as men in all areas of coverage. Do not use sexist references, demeaning stereotypes or condescending phrases. Use the same standards for men and women when deciding to include specific mention of personal appearance or marital and family situation.

# X

**X; Twitter** – On first and subsequent references, refer to the platform as X. The term tweet remains acceptable as a noun and a verb. Discontinue use of the blue bird logo and use the X logo instead.

# Y

**yule, yuletide**

# Z