



THE AMERICAN LEGION

Publication Style Guide

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Introduction

This style guide has been developed to assist American Legion staff and volunteers to be as consistent as possible in all written communications. The ultimate goal is for articles, press releases, social media posts, brochures, booklets and other published material to have a uniform style. This booklet does not replace rules and regulations adopted at local posts or individual departments; however, it is designed to offer guidance as to established norms, and is highly recommended for use at every level of the organization.

Sections include quick tips; the use of abbreviations, acronyms and capitalization; titles; and military terms and ranks.

In most circumstances, The American Legion follows AP style, as outlined in the latest editions of *The Associated Press Stylebook* and *Webster's New World College Dictionary*.

Quick tips

Keep your text simple. Don't use two words when one will do.

Not sure when to capitalize the “t” in The American Legion? Only when referring to the main organization or Sons of The American Legion. When the name is followed by another word or words, go with a lowercase “t”: *the American Legion Family, the American Legion Riders, the American Legion Baseball program.*

It's often necessary to give readers a full term or name before using an abbreviation or acronym. For example, most people know the Department of Veterans Affairs as VA, but don't know what CARES stands for (it's the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services). On first reference, give the full name or term. Use the acronym in second and further references: *American Legion posts nationwide are raising money for the National Emergency Fund.* After that, use the acronym: *the NEF provides direct financial assistance.*

Avoid alphabet soup by using capitalization only where it's needed and appropriate. When too many words are emphasized, none of the words stand out. Don't say, *American Legion Posts are full of Veterans who respect our Nation's Flag.* Do say, *American Legion posts are full of veterans who respect our nation's flag.* Limit capitalization to the first word of a sentence, proper nouns (people, groups, places, etc.), and titles preceding names.

What about titles? This rule is simple: capitalize a title preceding a name: *President Donald Trump signed the bill.* Don't capitalize a title if it follows the name or is used without an individual's name: *the president visited Arlington National Cemetery.* A few American Legion-specific examples include:

Preceding	Following
National Commander Charles E. Schmidt	Charles E. Schmidt, national commander
American Legion Auxiliary President Mary Davis	Mary Davis, president of the American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Illinois Commander Cheri Stanton	Cheri Stanton, commander of the Illinois American Legion
Post 48 Commander Joe Smith	Joe Smith, commander of Post 48
National Americanism Commission Chairman Richard Anderson	Richard Anderson, chairman of the Legion's National Americanism Commission

Abbreviate only a handful of titles. Most formal titles are spelled out, with the exceptions of *Dr.* (doctor), *Gov.* (governor), *Lt. Gov.* (lieutenant governor), *Rep.* (representative), *Sen.* (senator), and military titles. Avoid using *Dr.* as a formal title for individuals without a doctoral degree in dental surgery, medicine, optometry, or osteopathic, podiatric or veterinary medicine. If the context calls for using *Dr.* for an individual with another type of doctoral degree, indicate his or her specialty in the first or second reference.

Speaking of abbreviations, check those months and addresses. Write dates without *st, nd, rd, th*: *April 3*, not *April 3rd*. When a month is given with a specific date, abbreviate *Jan.* (January), *Feb.* (February), *Aug.* (August), *Sept.* (September), *Oct.* (October), *Nov.* (November) and *Dec.* (December). Spell out when using alone or with a year alone: *October 2001*. Do not use a comma to separate a month and year unless a date is given: *July 27, 1975*.

Spell out street names when used alone: *Pennsylvania Avenue*. With numbered addresses, use *Ave.* (Avenue), *Bld.* (Boulevard) and *St.* (Street): *700 N. Pennsylvania Ave.* Also spell out *First* through *Ninth*, and use numbers for *10th* and above. Abbreviate compass points for the direction of a street, in numbered addresses: *412 N. 82nd St.* Otherwise, *North 82nd Street*. City quadrants do not require periods: *NE, SW*.

Some cities and states are special. Per AP, the following U.S. city names can stand alone, without a state, in datelines and articles: *Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington*. In datelines on press releases, be sure to use all capital letters.

In the case of other U.S. cities, the state should be included. Spell out *Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Ohio, Texas* and *Utah*.

Other state names are abbreviated as follows, unless they stand alone in copy: *Ala.* (Alabama), *Ariz.* (Arizona), *Ark.* (Arkansas), *Calif.* (California), *Colo.* (Colorado), *Conn.* (Connecticut), *Del.* (Delaware), *Fla.* (Florida), *Ga.* (Georgia), *Ill.* (Illinois), *Ind.* (Indiana), *Kan.* (Kansas), *Ky.* (Kentucky), *La.* (Louisiana), *Md.* (Maryland), *Mass.* (Massachusetts), *Mich.* (Michigan), *Minn.* (Minnesota), *Miss.* (Mississippi), *Mo.* (Missouri), *Mont.* (Montana), *Neb.* (Nebraska), *Nev.* (Nevada), *N.H.* (New Hampshire), *N.J.* (New Jersey), *N.M.* (New Mexico), *N.Y.* (New York), *N.C.* (North Carolina), *N.D.* (North Dakota), *Okla.* (Oklahoma), *Ore.* (Oregon), *Pa.* (Pennsylvania), *R.I.* (Rhode Island), *S.C.* (South Carolina), *S.D.* (South Dakota), *Tenn.* (Tennessee), *Vt.* (Vermont), *Va.* (Virginia), *Wash.* (Washington), *W.Va.* (West Virginia), *Wis.* (Wisconsin), *Wyo.* (Wyoming).

Need to identify a member of Congress? Abbreviate representative or senator, and set off the party and state by commas following the person's name: *Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.* Include *U.S.* if necessary to distinguish the person from a representative or senator serving in state government: *U.S. Sen John McCain, R-Ariz., U.S. Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz.*

Bills, laws and all that stuff. Terminology is important here. Amendments, ordinances, resolutions and rules are *adopted* or *approved*. Bills are *passed*. Laws are *enacted*. In addition, be aware of accepted abbreviations for numbered resolutions, bills and laws: *H. Con. Res.* (House Concurrent Resolution), *H.J. Res.* (House Joint Resolution), *H. Res.* or *H.R.* (House Resolution), *P.L.* (Public Law), *S.* (Senate Bill), *S. Con. Res.* (Senate Concurrent Resolution), *S.J. Res.* (Senate Joint Resolution).

A word about race and ethnicity. *Black* and *African-American* are acceptable for American black persons of African descent. Use *Negro* or *Afro-American* only in names of organizations or quotations. *Latino* is the preferred term for a person from (or whose ancestors were from) a Spanish-speaking land or culture. Use *Latina* for women. *Hispanic* is acceptable, but follow a person's preference. Use *American Indians* or *Native Americans* for those in the United States, naming the tribe if possible. In Alaska, indigenous groups include Aleuts, Eskimos and Indians, collectively known as *Alaska Natives*. Again, where possible, follow a person's preference.

American Legion frequently used terms

adjutant Do not abbreviate.

administration Lowercase: *the president's administration, the Obama administration.*

adviser Not *advisor*.

attorney general Do not abbreviate.

amendment Capitalize when referring to a numbered amendment: *the 27th Amendment, the proposed flag amendment, a constitutional amendment.*

American Legion, The Always use *The American Legion* on first reference, capitalizing the "t." May use *the Legion* on second reference. Do not abbreviate *TAL*.

American Legion Auxiliary Also referred to as *the Legion Auxiliary* or *the Auxiliary*. Do not abbreviate *ALA*.

American Legion Baseball *ALB* acceptable on second reference.

American Legion Extension Institute *ALEI* acceptable on second reference.

American Legion Family Refers to the family of American Legion organizations: *The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and the American Legion Riders.*

American Legion Magazine, The *The American Legion Magazine* in all references.

American Legion National Headquarters Do not abbreviate *American Legion National HQ*. Call *American Legion National Headquarters* in Indianapolis to distinguish from *The American Legion's Washington, D.C., office*.

American Legion World Series *ALWS* acceptable on second reference.

Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans in Canada-United States *ANAVICUS* on second reference.

armed forces Do not capitalize unless *U.S. Armed Forces*.

article Do not abbreviate when referring to a section of a constitution.

assistant Do not abbreviate the word or title.

blog, blog entry, blog post

Board of Veterans Appeals *BVA* acceptable on second reference.

Boys Nation No apostrophe. *American Legion Boys Nation* preferred.

Boys State No apostrophe. *American Legion Boys State* preferred, or department-specific name: *American Legion Buckeye Boys State, Hoosier Boys State*. Participants are *Boys Staters*.

bylaw

capital Do not capitalize.

Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services *CARES* on second reference.

Capitol Capitalize *U.S. Capitol* and *the Capitol* when referring to the building in Washington, D.C. Do the same for state capitol buildings: *the Iowa State Capitol*.

chairman Do not abbreviate.

Child Welfare Foundation The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. *CWF* acceptable on second reference.

Citizens Flag Alliance *CFA* on second reference.

colors Refers to the U.S. flag: *the honor guard posted the colors*. Do not capitalize.

commission Capitalize only when referring to a specific commission: *the National Security Commission, the commission*. Do not abbreviate.

committee Capitalize only when referring to a specific committee: *the Military Benefits & Quality of Life Committee, the committee*. Do not abbreviate.

community-based outpatient clinics *CBOC* on second reference.

Congress, congressional

constitution, constitutional amendment Use *the Constitution of the United States, the U.S. Constitution, the Constitution*, but *constitutional, constitutional amendment*.

American Legion frequently used terms

Constitution of The American Legion Uppercase in formal references: *According to the Constitution of The American Legion, the Legion's constitution.*

convention Lowercase unless referring to a specific convention: *the upcoming department convention, The American Legion's national convention, the 98th National Convention of The American Legion, the American Legion Department of Wisconsin convention.*

Court of Veterans Appeals CVA on second reference.

DD 214 Short for *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty*. Acceptable in all references.

Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency DPAA on second reference.

department Capitalize only when referring to a specific American Legion department: *the Department of Hawaii, five Legion departments*. May be referred to as state (*the Iowa American Legion*) or department (*The American Legion Department of Iowa*). Do not abbreviate.

Department of Defense DoD acceptable on second reference. Not DOD.

department executive committee Capitalize when referring to a specific department: *Wisconsin's Department Executive Committee*. Avoid abbreviating DEC.

department service officer DSO acceptable on second reference.

Direct Membership Solicitation DMS on second reference.

Director for Veterans Employment and Training DVET on second reference.

disabled Do not describe a person as *disabled* unless it is pertinent to the article. Avoid descriptions such as *afflicted with* or *suffers from*: *he has PTSD, she has cancer*. Avoid terms such as *handicapped, crippled, confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound*.

Disabled Veterans Outreach Program DVOP on second reference.

district Spell out numbers fewer than 10: *the Department of Indiana's Third District, the 10th District*

division Capitalize when referring to a specific American Legion division: *division chairmen, the Legion's Americanism Division*.

executive Do not abbreviate.

Fall Meetings Capitalize when referring to the National Executive Committee's October meetings: *the National Executive Committee passed a resolution during its Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, the NEC's Fall Meetings*.

Family Support Network FSN on second reference.

federal Capitalize when part of a proper name: *the federal government, the Federal Trade Commission*.

fiscal The 12-month period that a corporation or government body uses for bookkeeping. The U.S. government's fiscal year begins three months ahead of the calendar year, in October. Do not abbreviate FY: *fiscal year 2015, fiscal 2015*.

flag Lowercase in all references: *the flag, the U.S. flag*. Capitalize *Grand Old Flag, Old Glory* and the *Star-Spangled Banner*.

flag amendment Refers to proposed constitutional amendment that would return to states the right to pass laws protecting the U.S. flag from desecration. Lowercase unless referring to a specific bill.

flagpole

Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion FODPAL on second reference.

Founding Fathers Capitalize when referring to the authors of the U.S. Constitution. Lowercase when referring to The American Legion's founders.

four pillars Phrase refers to The American Legion's central missions: *Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth*. Sometimes shortened to *Veterans, Security, Americanism, Youth*. Lowercase preferred: *the four pillars upon which The American Legion was founded, the Legion's four pillars*.

Fourth of July, July Fourth, Independence Day Do not use *4th of July, July 4th*.

fundraising, fundraiser

GI Government issue. Do not spell out or use periods. Use *soldier* unless talking about the *GI Bill of Rights*.

global war on terrorism Lowercase. Do not abbreviate GWOT.

American Legion frequently used terms

Gulf War Illness *GWI* acceptable on second reference.

half-mast, half-staff On ships and at naval stations ashore, flags are flown at *half-mast*. Elsewhere ashore, they are flown *half-staff*.

health care Two words, except when combined as part of a proper name: *the Miami VA Healthcare System*. Hyphenate when using as an adjective: *the state's health-care system*.

homefront

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Note the apostrophe. Avoid abbreviating *HVAC*. *House VA committee* preferred on second reference.

junior, senior Abbreviate when following a name but do not precede by a comma: *Martin Luther King Jr.*

Junior Shooting Sports Program *The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program* is preferred, or *Junior Shooting Sports*. *JSSP* is acceptable on second reference.

killed in action *KIA* acceptable on second reference.

Korean War Do not use *Korean conflict* or *Korea veteran*.

Legacy Run *American Legion Legacy Run* is preferred, and *Legacy Run* on second reference: *the American Legion Legacy Run, the 10th annual Legacy Run*.

Legacy Scholarship *American Legion Legacy Scholarship* is preferred, and *Legacy Scholarship* on second reference: *the American Legion Legacy Scholarship was created after 9/11, she received a Legacy Scholarship*.

legislature Capitalize when preceded by the name of a state: *the Colorado Legislature*.

Local Veterans Employment Representative *LVER* on second reference.

Local Veterans Outreach Representative *LVOR* on second reference.

Legionnaire A member of The American Legion.

login, logon, logoff Use two words for verb form: *I log in to my computer*.

long time, longtime *They have known each other a long time. They are longtime friends*.

Membership Management Information System *MMIS* on second reference.

Membership & Post Activities *M&PA* acceptable on second reference.

military treatment facilities *MTFs* acceptable on second reference.

missing in action *MIA* acceptable on second reference. *POW/MIA* acceptable in all references.

Montgomery GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve *MGIB, MGIB-SR* on second reference.

National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion *NADHAL* on second reference.

National American Legion Press Association *NALPA* on second reference.

national anthem Do not capitalize: *she sang the national anthem*. Proper title is *"The Star-Spangled Banner"*.

national commander On first reference, include the organization: *American Legion National Commander Charles E. Schmidt*. Uppercase only when preceding a person's name: *National Commander Charles E. Schmidt, the national commander of The American Legion* or *Charles E. Schmidt, national commander*.

National Emergency Fund *NEF* on second reference.

National Executive Committee, National Executive Committeeman *NEC, NECman* on second reference.

national judge advocate *NJA* acceptable on second reference.

National Personnel Records Center *NPRC* on second reference.

No. Use when identifying a resolution or rule number. Do not use #.

noncombat, noncombatant

nonprofit No hyphen: *nonprofit groups*.

OCW On first reference, identify as *The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program*. *OCW* acceptable on second reference.

American Legion frequently used terms

OK, OK'd, OK'ing, OKs Do not use *okay*.

online

Operation Desert Shield *Desert Shield* acceptable on second reference: *veterans of Desert Shield*. Do not abbreviate.

Operation Desert Storm *Desert Storm* acceptable on second reference. Do not abbreviate.

Operation Enduring Freedom *OEF* on second reference. Also called *Afghanistan War*.

Operation Iraqi Freedom *OIF* on second reference. Also called *Iraq War*.

Paid Up For Life *PUFL* acceptable on second reference.

past department commander Capitalize when the title precedes a name. Avoid abbreviating *PDC*.

past national commander Capitalize when the title precedes a name. *PNC* is acceptable on second reference, particularly when referring to a group: *PNCs Detweiler, Dellinger and Helm*.

Persian Gulf War Also referred to as the *Gulf War*.

past national vice commander Capitalize when the title precedes a name. Avoid abbreviating *PNVC*.

peacekeeping, peacetime

percent One word, always spell out: *up to 20 percent of the force is non-deployable*.

post Capitalize only when referring to a specific, numbered American Legion post: *the Chattanooga post, American Legion Post 95 in Chattanooga, Post 95, American Legion posts* or *Legion posts*.

post-9/11 *post-9/11 veterans, Post-9/11 GI Bill*

post-traumatic stress disorder *PTSD* on second reference.

preamble Capitalize when referring to the organization's constitution: *the Preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion, our constitution's preamble*.

Presidents Day

prisoner of war *POW* acceptable on second reference. *POW/MIA* acceptable in all references.

president Capitalize only as a formal title before one or more names: *President Donald Trump, former President Barack Obama, Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush*. Use the first and last name of current and former U.S. presidents on first reference. On subsequent references, use only the last name.

Puerto Rico Do not abbreviate.

re-elect, re-election

Regional Veterans Employment Representative *RVER* on second reference.

resolution Capitalize and abbreviate only when referring to a specific, numbered resolution: *the NEC passed a resolution, Res. No. 30*.

retired Do not abbreviate or capitalize as part of an individual's military rank: *retired Brig. Gen. Jane Smith, or Jane Smith, a retired brigadier general*.

Saddam Hussein *Saddam* acceptable on second reference.

Selective Service System *Selective Service* preferred. Do not abbreviate *SSS*.

Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Note the apostrophe. Avoid abbreviating *SVAC*. *Senate VA committee* preferred on second reference.

sergeant-at-arms

servicemember One word.

Sept. 11, 2001 *Sept. 11* or *9/11* are acceptable.

smartphone

Sons of The American Legion Use *the Sons* or *SAL* on second reference.

Spring Meetings Capitalize when referring to the National Executive Committee's May meetings: *the National Executive Committee passed a resolution during its Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, the NEC's Spring Meetings*.

subcommittee Do not abbreviate.

suicide Do not use *committed suicide*, which implies a criminal act. Use *killed herself, took his own life* or *died by suicide*.

Strategic Air Command *SAC* acceptable on second reference.

taps Lowercase without quotation marks for the bugle call sounded at "lights out" and military funerals.

time Use *a.m.* and *p.m.* Small letters and no spaces.

time zones Abbreviations such as *EST, CDT* and *MST* are acceptable on first reference for zones within the continental United States when accompanied by a clock reading: *1 p.m. EST*. Otherwise, spell them out, and lowercase all but the region in short forms: *Chicago is in the Central time zone, Eastern time*.

American Legion frequently used terms

traumatic brain injury *TBI* on second reference.

TRICARE Capitalize all letters.

undersecretary One word.

underway

United Nations Spell out unless used as an adjective: *U.N. meetings, U.N. officials*. *UN* permitted in headlines.

United States Spell out unless used as an adjective: *U.S. forces, U.S. officials*. *US* permitted in headlines.

VA The Department of Veterans Affairs. *VA* on second reference (no periods). Do not use *the VA*.

versus Spell out in ordinary speech and writing: *proposals to privatize VA versus proposals to reform the cabinet-level agency*. In short expressions, abbreviation is permitted: *the guns vs. butter debate*.

veteran, veterans Do not capitalize: *Vietnam War veterans*. Avoid using *vets*.

Veterans Affairs Medical Center *VAMC* on second reference.

Veterans Affairs Regional Office *VARO* on second reference.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation *VA&R* acceptable on second reference.

Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service *VAVS* on second reference.

Veterans Benefits Administration *VBA* on second reference.

Veterans Day No apostrophe. Formerly Armistice Day, the federal legal holiday is observed Nov. 11.

Veterans Employment and Training Service *VETS* on second reference.

Veterans Health Administration *VHA* on second reference.

Veterans Integrated Service Network *VISN* on second reference.

veterans service organization No apostrophe. *VSO* acceptable on second reference.

Vietnam One word. Do not use *Viet Nam*.

Vietnam War era When referring to veterans who did not serve in theater, use *Vietnam War-era veteran*.

vice chairman, vice commander, vice president No hyphen.

wartime

website, webcam, webcast, webmaster But *Web, Web page, Web browser, Web feed*.

Wi-Fi

women veterans Preferred over *female veterans*.

World War I, World War II Do not abbreviate *WWI, WWII*.

Military terms

active-duty training *ADT*
acceptable on second reference.

Air Force *U.S. Air Force* or *Air Force*.
Do not abbreviate *USAF*. In 1941,
Congress established the U.S. Army
Air Forces. Prior to that, the air arm
was called the U.S. Army Air Corps.
The U.S. Air Force was created in
1947.

Air Force base Do not abbreviate
AFB. Per the U.S. Air Force, bases
in the United States use *Air Force
base* in their title and *air base* for
overseas installations: *Lackland Air
Force Base*, *Aviano Air Base*.

Air National Guard Do not
abbreviate *ANG*.

aircraft Use a hyphen when
changing from letters to figures. No
hyphen is necessary when adding a
letter after figures: *F-15 Eagle*, *C-17A
Globemaster III*.

anti-aircraft

anti-ballistic missile *ABM*
acceptable in all references, but
the term should be defined in the
story. Avoid *ABM missiles*.

Army *U.S. Army* or *Army*. Do not
abbreviate *USA*.

**Army and Air Force Exchange
Service** *AAFES* acceptable on
second reference.

Army Commendation Medal Do
not abbreviate.

Army Reserve Do not abbreviate
USAR.

AWOL Acceptable in all references
for *absent without leave*.

battalion Capitalize when referring
to a numbered group: *the 10th
Battalion*.

**battlefield, battleground,
battleship** But *battle stations*.

basic allowance for housing *BAH*
acceptable on second reference.

basic allowance for quarters *BAQ*
acceptable on second reference.

battle dress uniform *BDU*
acceptable in all references.

cadet Proper title for men and
women enrolled at West Point
Military Academy, the Air Force
Academy, Coast Guard Academy
and Merchant Marine Academy.

caliber Use hyphen when giving a
measurement: *a .22-caliber rifle*, *a
.45-caliber pistol*.

cavalry Do not abbreviate.

cease-fire Verb form is *cease fire*.

chief of naval operations Do not
abbreviate *CNO*.

Combat Infantry Badge *CIB*
acceptable on second reference.

Coast Guard *U.S. Coast Guard* or
Coast Guard. Do not abbreviate
USCG.

Coast Guardsman Lowercase
guardsman when it stands alone.

commander in chief No hyphens.

company Capitalize only when
part of a proper name: *D Company*.
Do not abbreviate.

continental United States *CONUS*
acceptable on second reference.

court-martial, courts-martial

cyberspace, cybersecurity

D-Day Refers to June 6, 1944, the
day the Allies invaded Western
Europe in World War II.

Distinguished Flying Cross Do
not abbreviate.

Distinguished Service Cross Do
not abbreviate.

drill instructor Do not abbreviate
DI.

front line Hyphenate when using
as an adjective: *front-line forces*.

improvised explosive device *IED*
acceptable on second reference.
Roadside bomb preferable.

infantry division Do not
abbreviate *ID*: *he commanded an
infantry division*, *the 3rd Infantry
Division*.

intercontinental ballistic missile
ICBM acceptable on second
reference. Avoid *ICBM missiles*.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Also *the Joint
Chiefs*, but lowercase *the chiefs* or
chiefs of staff.

LST Landing Ship Tank. Do not
spell out.

LCI Landing Craft Infantry. Do not
spell out.

LCVP Landing craft, vehicle,
personnel. Do not spell out.
Commonly known as *Higgins boat*.

M1, M16 No hyphens when
referring to these rifles.

Marines *U.S. Marines*, *the Marines*,
the Marine Corps. Do not abbreviate
USMC. Do not refer to Marines as
soldiers. Use *troops* if a generic term
is needed.

Marine Amphibious Unit *MAU*
acceptable on second reference.

Marine Corps Reserve Do not abbreviate *USMCR*.

Medal of Honor The nation's highest military honor. Do not use *Congressional Medal of Honor*. Use *Medal of Honor recipient*, not *winner*.

medevac Short for *medical evacuation*.

Merchant Marine Capitalize when referring to the organization or the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Members are *merchant mariners* or *merchant crewmen*.

midshipman Proper title for men and women enrolled at the Naval Academy.

military occupational specialty *MOS* acceptable in all references.

millimeter May be abbreviated when referring to weapons: *a 105 mm artillery piece*, *a 105 mm cannon*.

MRE Meals Ready to Eat. Do not spell out.

National Guard Capitalize when referring to U.S. or state-level forces: *the National Guard*, *the Guard*, *the Indiana National Guard*. When referring to an individual, use *National Guardsman* or *guardsman*.

Navy *U.S. Navy* or *the Navy*. Do not abbreviate *USN*.

Navy Reserve Do not use *Naval Reserve* or abbreviate *USNR*.

no man's land No hyphens.

noncommissioned officer *NCO* acceptable on second reference.

North American Air Defense Command *NORAD* on second reference.

Officer Candidate School *OCS* acceptable on second reference.

officer in charge/ noncommissioned officer in charge *OIC*, *NCOIC* acceptable on second reference.

post exchange *PX* acceptable on second reference.

PT boat Acceptable in all references for *patrol torpedo boat*.

reduction in force *RIF* acceptable on second reference.

reserve, reservist Capitalize when referring to a specific branch of the military: *the Guard and reserves*, *the Navy Reserve*, *Army reservists*.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps *ROTC* acceptable in all references. When service is specified, use *Army ROTC*, *Navy ROTC* or *Air Force ROTC*, not *AROTC*, *NROTC* or *AFROTC*.

rocket-propelled grenade *RPG* acceptable on second reference.

SEALs A special operations branch of the Navy. The acronym stands for *sea, air, land*. Do not spell out.

SOS

special forces Capitalize when referring to *U.S. Army Special Forces*, also known as Green Berets. Others, such as Navy SEALs and Army Rangers, should be called *special operations forces*.

Special Operations Command *SOC* acceptable on second reference.

Strategic Air Command *SAC* acceptable on second reference.

surface-to-air missile *SAM* acceptable on second reference. Avoid *SAM missiles*.

temporary duty *TDY* on second reference.

Thrift Savings Plan *TSP* acceptable on second reference.

U-boat

unmanned aerial vehicle *UAV* acceptable on second reference.

USCGC United States Coast Guard Cutter. Do not spell out: *USCGC Healy*, *the Coast Guard cutter Healy*.

USS United States Ship. Do not spell out or use periods, and drop on second reference: *USS Nimitz*, *the Nimitz*.

Women's Army Corps *WAC* acceptable on second reference.

Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service *WAVES* acceptable on second reference.

Military titles

Use AP style for military rank rather than the service branches' system of abbreviation (e.g. COL for colonel, CDR for commander). On first reference, use the title, and on subsequent references use the person's last name only.

ARMY, MARINE CORPS, AIR FORCE COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

O-10	general	Gen.
O-9	lieutenant general	Lt. Gen.
O-8	major general	Maj. Gen.
O-7	brigadier general	Brig. Gen.
O-6	colonel	Col.
O-5	lieutenant colonel	Lt. Col.
O-4	major	Maj.
O-3	captain	Capt.
O-2	first lieutenant	1st Lt.
O-1	second lieutenant	2nd Lt.

NAVY, COAST GUARD COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

O-10	admiral	Adm.
O-9	vice admiral	Vice Adm.
O-8	read admiral (upper half)	Rear Adm.
O-7	rear admiral (lower half)	Rear Adm.
O-6	captain	Capt.
O-5	commander	Cmdr.
O-4	lieutenant commander	Lt. Cmdr.
O-3	lieutenant	Lt.
O-2	lieutenant junior grade	Lt. j.g.
O-1	ensign	Ensign

Note: The special ranks of general of the Army, general of the Air Force and fleet admiral are reserved for wartime only.

WARRANT OFFICERS

W-5	chief warrant officer 5	Chief Warrant Officer 5
W-4	chief warrant officer 4	Chief Warrant Officer 4
W-3	chief warrant officer 3	Chief Warrant Officer 3
W-2	chief warrant officer 2	Chief Warrant Officer 2
W-1	chief warrant officer 1	Chief Warrant Officer 1

Note: The Air Force does not have warrant officers. The Navy and the Coast Guard no longer use the grade of Chief Warrant Officer 1, and the Coast Guard does not have a Chief Warrant Officer 5.

Military titles

ARMY ENLISTED

E-9	sergeant major of the Army	Sgt. Maj. of the Army
E-9	command sergeant major	Cmd. Sgt. Maj.
E-9	sergeant major	Sgt. Maj.
E-8	first sergeant	1st Sgt.
E-8	master sergeant	Master Sgt.
E-7	sergeant first class	Sgt. 1st Class
E-6	staff sergeant	Staff Sgt.
E-5	sergeant	Sgt.
E-4	corporal	Cpl.
E-4	specialist	Spc.
E-3	private first class	Pfc.
E-2	private	Pvt.
E-1	private	Pvt.

MARINE CORPS ENLISTED

E-9	sergeant major of the Marine Corps	Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps
E-9	sergeant major	Sgt. Maj.
E-9	master gunnery sergeant	Master Gunnery Sgt.
E-8	first sergeant	1st Sgt.
E-8	master sergeant	Master Sgt.
E-7	gunnery sergeant	Gunnery Sgt.
E-6	staff sergeant	Staff Sgt.
E-5	sergeant	Sgt.
E-4	corporal	Cpl.
E-3	lance corporal	Lance Cpl.
E-2	private first class	Pfc.
E-1	private	Pvt.

AIR FORCE ENLISTED

E-9	chief master sergeant of the Air Force	Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force
E-9	command chief master sergeant	Command Chief Master Sgt.
E-9	chief master sergeant	Chief Master Sgt.
E-8	senior master sergeant	Senior Master Sgt.
E-7	master sergeant	Master Sgt.
E-6	technical sergeant	Tech. Sgt.
E-5	staff sergeant	Staff. Sgt.

Military titles

E-4	senior airman	Senior Airman
E-3	airman first class	Airman 1st Class
E-2	airman	Airman
E-1	airman basic	Airman

Note: In the Army, Marines and Air Force, all ranks of sergeant are termed noncommissioned officers, or NCOs, as are corporals in the Army and Marine Corps. NCOs in the top three enlisted grades (E-7, E-8 and E-9) are considered senior noncommissioned officers, or SNCOs; in the Marine Corps, senior NCOs are called staff noncommissioned officers and include the rank of staff sergeant (E-6).

COAST GUARD ENLISTED

E-9	master chief petty officer	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard
E-9	master chief petty officer	Master Chief Petty Officer
E-8	senior chief petty officer	Senior Chief Petty Officer
E-7	chief petty officer	Chief Petty Officer
E-6	petty officer first class	Petty Officer 1st Class
E-5	petty officer second class	Petty Officer 2nd Class
E-4	petty officer third class	Petty Officer 3rd Class
E-3	seaman	Seaman
E-2	seaman apprentice	Seaman Apprentice
E-1	seaman recruit	Seaman Recruit

NAVY ENLISTED

E-9	master chief petty officer of the Navy	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
E-9	master chief petty officer	Master Chief Petty Officer
E-8	senior chief petty officer	Senior Chief Petty Officer
E-7	chief petty officer	Chief Petty Officer
E-6	petty officer first class	Petty Officer 1st Class
E-5	petty officer second class	Petty Officer 2nd Class
E-4	petty officer third class	Petty Officer 3rd Class
E-3	seaman	Seaman
E-2	seaman apprentice	Seaman Apprentice
E-1	seaman recruit	Seaman Recruit

Note: In the Navy and Coast Guard, all ranks of petty officer are designated noncommissioned officers, or NCOs. Chief petty officers (the grades of E-7, E-8 and E-9) are considered senior noncommissioned officers.

For **officer rank insignias**, go to www.defense.gov/about-dod/insignias/officers.

For **enlisted rank insignias**, go to www.defense.gov/about-dod/insignias/enlisted.

Common abbreviations/acronyms

In the case of most of acronyms, **spell out the term on first reference and use the acronym on second and all further references.** Per AP, avoid following an organization's full name with the acronym in parentheses or set off by dashes. If an acronym wouldn't be clear on second reference without doing so, don't use it.

Acronyms marked with asterisks do not need spelled out; they are allowed in all references, though context should be considered.

A&A	Aid & Attendance
ABMC	American Battle Monuments Commission
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AFRH	Armed Forces Retirement Home
ALS	amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
AMVETS*	American Veterans
AP	Associated Press
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BAMC	Brooke Army Medical Center
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
BSA	Boy Scouts of America
BVA	Blind Veterans Association
CASA	court-appointed special advocate
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CBT	cognitive behavioral therapy
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEO	chief executive officer
CFO	chief financial officer
CHAMPUS	Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services
CHAMPVA	Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs
CIA*	Central Intelligence Agency
CMN	Children's Miracle Network
COLA	cost-of-living adjustment
COO	chief operations officer
COPD	chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
COTA	Children's Organ Transplant Association
CPA	certified public accountant
CPR*	cardiopulmonary resuscitation
CQ	Congressional Quarterly

Common abbreviations/acronyms

CR	continuing resolution
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CWT	Compensated Work Therapy
DAV	Disabled American Veterans
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DMZ	demilitarized zone
DNC	Democratic National Committee
DoE	Department of Energy
DoJ	Department of Justice
DoL	Department of Labor
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunities Commission
EMT	emergency medical technician
ER	emergency room
ESGR	Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
EU	European Union
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAQ*	frequently asked questions
FBI*	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GDP	gross domestic product
GPS*	Global Positioning System
GOP*	Grand Old Party (use only on second reference to Republican Party)
HHS	Health and Human Services
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICE	Immigrations and Customs Enforcement
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service

Common abbreviations/acronyms

IOM	Institute of Medicine
IRA	Individual Retirement Account
IRS*	Internal Revenue Service
IT	information technology
JAG	Judge Advocate General's Corps
LA	Los Angeles
LGBT*	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LOST	Law of the Sea Treaty
MAD	mutual assured destruction
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MPH	miles per hour
MRI*	magnetic resonance imaging
MVP*	most valuable player
NATO*	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NASA*	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NGAUS	National Guard Association of the United States
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NIH	National Institute of Health
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board
NPR*	National Public Radio
NRA	National Rifle Association
NRC	National Research Council
NSA	National Security Agency
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NVLSF	National Veterans Legal Services Program
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPEC*	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Common abbreviations/acronyms

OTJ	on-the-job training
PAC	political action committee
PAY-GO	Pay-As-You-Go
PC	political correctness
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSA	public service announcement
PVA	Paralyzed Veterans of America
RNC	Republican National Committee
RN	registered nurse
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
SBA	Small Business Administration
SCHIP	State Children's Health Insurance Program
SCRA	Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SDVI	Service Disabled Veterans Insurance
SF 80	Standard Form 80
SGLI	Servicemen's Group Life Insurance
SMC	Special Monthly Compensation
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSN	Social Security number
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
SUV	sport utility vehicle
TAPS	Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
U.S.C.	United States Code (U.S. Code on first reference)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
UK	United Kingdom
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USDA	U.S. Drug Administration
USERRA	Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
USO*	United Service Organization

Common abbreviations/acronyms

USPS	U.S. Postal Service
VC	Viet Cong
V-E	Victory in Europe
VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VGLI	Veterans Group Life Insurance
VIP*	very important person
V-J	Victory Over Japan
VVA	Vietnam Veterans of America
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
WRNMMC	Walter Reed National Military Medical Center