

When referencing military ranks in any ROA publication, the Department of Defense Associated Press style will be used as the standard reference format. Materials posted to this website are considered a ROA publication.

AP Style Military Titles

Capitalize a military rank when used as a formal title before an individual's name.

On first reference, use the appropriate title before the full name of a member of the military. In subsequent references, do not continue using the title before a name. Use only the last name.

Spell out and lower a title when it is substituted for a name. For example,

- General Patton was one of the top U.S. commanders in World War II. The general endorsed this idea.

In some instances, it may be necessary to explain the significance of a title. For example,

- Army Sgt. Maj. John Smith described the attack. Smith, who holds the Army's highest rank for enlistees, said that it was unprovoked.

In addition to the ranks listed below, each service has ratings such as "machinist," "radarman," "torpedoman," etc., that are job descriptions. Do not use any of these designations as a title on first reference. If one is used before a name in subsequent reference, do not capitalize or abbreviate it.

Even more than this, each service branch has its own systems of abbreviating officer and enlisted ranks—e.g., COL for colonel in the Army, CMDR for Navy commander—that vary widely from AP Style. However, the Department of Defense uses the AP Stylebook's military titles in news releases because the abbreviations are more easily understood.

Below is a list of military titles and how they should appear in AP Style.

Rank Usage before a name

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**

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.**

NAVY and 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**

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**

MARINE CORPS

The ranks and abbreviations for commissioned officers in the Marine Corps are the same as those in the Army. Warrant officer ratings follow the same system that is used in the Navy. There are no specialist ratings in the Marine Corps.

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 - **Chief Warrant Officer**

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.**

AIR FORCE

Ranks and abbreviations for commissioned officers in the Air Force are the same as those in the Army.

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.**

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**

How to Make Military Titles Plural

To make a specific title plural, add an “s” to the principal element in the title. For example,

- Gens. Jim Smith and Robert Johnson testified at a government hearing.
- Pvts. Alex Jones and John Brown were disciplined for their behavior.

Retired Officers

You may attribute, on first reference, a military rank before the name of an officer who has retired if it is relevant to the story at hand. However, do not use the military abbreviation “Ret.” Instead use “retired” just as you would use “former” before the title of a civilian. For example,

- That is when retired Army Gen. David Petraeus entered the room.