



U.S. Navy Style Guide

Navy editors and writers should follow the most recent edition of the Associated Press Stylebook except as noted in this U.S. Navy Style Guide.

"A" school - Use double quotes throughout a story. If included in a quote, use single quotes: 'A' school.

abbreviations, acronyms - Upper case initialisms and acronyms. Spell out on first reference with the abbreviation in parenthesis. Some acronyms, such as NATO, can be used on first reference. Check the AP Stylebook.

- The individual augmentees (IAs) met May 5. All Sailors reporting to IA duty are invited to attend.

Other examples:

- BUMED - Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
- CIWS - close-in weapons system
- CNO - Chief of Naval Operations
- OPTEMPO - Operations Tempo or Tempo of Operations
- OCONUS - Outside Continental United States
- RHIB - rigid hull inflatable boat
- SECNAV - Secretary of the Navy

aboard vs. onboard – Use aboard when referencing events taking place on a ship or aircraft. Use onboard when discussing shore based events.

- The crew is aboard the ship.
- The memorial ceremony was held onboard Naval Station Norfolk.
- Also, a Sailor is stationed "on," "at," "is serving with" or "is assigned to" a ship. A Sailor does not serve "in" a ship.
- A ship is "based at" or "homeported at" a specific place. A plane is "stationed at" or is "aboard" a ship; is "deployed with" or is "operating from" a ship. Squadrons are "stationed at" air stations. Air wings are "deployed with" ships.

active duty (noun), active-duty (adjective) - Lower case on all references.

- As a noun, two words: Navy personnel serve on active duty.
- As an adjective, hyphenate: All active-duty personnel must participate.



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air wing - Use as two words.

aircraft - acceptable characterization of naval aviation platforms. Do not refer to military aircraft as "airplanes" or "planes."

aircraft designations - Always used as a letter(s) followed by a hyphen and number: SH-60B Sea Hawk or F/A-18E/F Super Hornet.

aircraft squadrons - Spell out full name of squadron on first reference. On second reference, use abbreviation and hyphenate.

- Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 97 deployed aboard USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). During their deployment, VFA-97 maintained a perfect safety record.

aircrew, aircrew member - Per Webster's one or two words.

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

Anchors Aweigh - not Anchors Away

anti-aircraft, anti-submarine - Hyphenate

Arabian Gulf - use instead of Persian Gulf per Commander, Naval Forces Central Command U.S. 5th Fleet

armed forces - Capitalize only as a proper name (Armed Forces Day), not as a noun (the armed forces) or adjective (an armed-forces member). It is lower cased unless part of a title or when preceded by U.S., as in U.S. Armed Forces.

attribution - Identify the source of reported information; especially objective and opinioned-based statements. Include context in which comment was made if it is not apparent.

- Use "said" in quotes. Do not use "says."
- See "quotation marks."

battalion - Use numerals in unit names, spell out on first reference and abbreviate and hyphenate on second reference:

- Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 4; NMCB-4 (not NMCB FOUR)



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battle group - Do not use "battle group." Rather, use "carrier strike group" or "expeditionary strike group."

boat - Use to describe a submarine. Do not use to describe a ship.

boot camp - Use as two words.

burial at sea - Do not hyphenate.

call signs - Do not refer to individuals by call signs. Use full name and rank.

carrier strike group - Capitalize when used with the name of a ship. Precede name of strike group with "the."

- “The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group arrived in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations.”

chaplain - Chaplains are identified as 'Cmdr. John W. Smith, a Navy chaplain,' in the first reference and as 'chaplain' or by last name thereafter.

chief (select) - Use the service member's current rank: “Petty Officer 1st Class Franklin Pierce will be promoted to chief petty officer next month.” Do not use “select”

Chief of Naval Operations - Lowercase when referenced after an individual's name or when used alone.

chief petty officer - Applies to Navy or Coast Guard personnel in pay grade E-7. Lowercase when referenced after an individual's name or when used alone.

Chiefs Mess - do not include apostrophe

cities/datelines - For cities that stand alone, use the list of datelines found in the AP Stylebook. Because of their strong Navy ties and frequent reference in stories, , 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 when it precedes an individual's name and do not use a comma to separate it from the name. Lower case titles when they follow the name or when not accompanied by one.

- Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Franklin R. Parker holds an all hands call.
- Davey Jones, Naval Station Norfolk historian, logs in artifacts.
- Use last names only on second and all following references. This applies to both men and women.



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- Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus
- Bob Johnson, undersecretary of the Navy for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, meets with Phil Dert, a construction worker.

close proximity - Do not use; it's redundant. All proximity is close.

coalition - Do not capitalize.

- U.S. and coalition forces took part in the event.

Coast Guardsman - Capitalize in all references to U.S. Coast Guard.

- Sailors and Coast Guardsmen are instrumental in patrolling the Caribbean for drug smugglers.
- The local coast guardsmen work with Sailors to protect harbors.

Commander in Chief - Used only for the President. Always capitalize. Do not hyphenate.

commanding officer - Do not capitalize except when directly preceding the title and 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, Fla.

CONUS - "Continental United States." CONUS refers to the 48 contiguous states. It is not synonymous with United States. Do not use unless in a quote.

crew member - Use as two words. Do not use "crewman" or "crewmen." See service members.

currently – Avoid use. This term is redundant by nature. The ship is underway. Not – The ship is currently underway.

datelines/cities - For cities that stand alone, use the list of datelines found in AP Style. Because of their strong Navy ties, Norfolk, San Diego, and Pearl Harbor can stand alone, without states.

dates – Follow the guidelines in the AP Stylebook

D-Day - D-Day was June 6, 1944, the day the Allies invaded Europe during World War II.

decommissioned ships/submarines - Include reference that ship or submarine is no longer active.

- "The decommissioned aircraft carrier, USS Constellation (CV 64), will serve as a museum."



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departments - Do not capitalize

- USS Carl Vinson engineering department....
- The engineering department....

dependent - Do not use when referring to family of military personnel. Use terms such as "family members," "wife," "husband," "spouse," "parent," "child," etc. "Dependent" is perceived as derogatory. Do not identify dependents by name in photo captions.

detachment - Abbreviate as "Det." in all references.

- Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light (HSL) 43, Det. 5 also participated in the exercise.

DEVRON – submarine development squadron

doctor - Navy doctors are identified as "Cmdr. John W. Smith, a Navy doctor" in the first reference and by last name thereafter. . See "military titles."

DOD/DoD – Department of Defense DOD or Pentagon is acceptable on second reference

dry dock (noun), dry-dock (verb) - Do not use as one word. (See dictionary)

E-1 through E-3 Sailors - The term refers to enlisted Navy members in pay grades E-1 to E-3. These Sailors are identified as seaman recruit (SR), seaman apprentice (SA) or seaman (SN) . Capitalize when directly preceding a name.

effect, affect - Effect is to cause, affect is to produce an effect upon. (Websters)

ensure, insure - "Ensure" is a guarantee, while "insure" means to put insurance on something.

exercises - Use full title on first reference. Omit the word "exercise" on second reference: Exercise Kernal Potlatch '16, Operation Imminent Thunder. On second reference use Kernal Potlatch or Imminent Thunder. If exercise is abbreviated, follow the rules under the entry "abbreviations and acronyms." Example: RIMPAC '18

fast-attack - Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

- The fast-attack submarine deployed in November.

fleets - Use numerals and capitalize when referring to specific fleets (U.S. 6th Fleet, U.S. 2nd Fleet, U.S. 7th Fleet). Do not capitalize in common usage: We sent a message to the fleet.

fleetwide - Use as one word.



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flight deck - Use as two words.

fo'c'sle - noun. A superstructure at or immediately aft of the bow of a vessel, used as a shelter for stores, machinery, etc., or as quarters for Sailors. It can also be written as "forecastle."

foreign cities - On first reference, the name of foreign cities are followed by the spelled-out name of the nation in which the city is located (e.g., Worms, Germany) unless listed in AP Style under datelines.

frontline/front line - Use as a noun; or use as an adjective.

- Troops on the frontline need supplies.
- Front line troops are the most in need.

general quarters - Lower case when spelled out: The crew stayed at general quarters for 18 hours. Do not use "GQ."

global war on terrorism - Do not capitalize.

gray - Not "grey," except greyhound.

guided-missile - Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

- The guided-missile cruiser is homeported in San Diego.
- The guided missile is loaded into a launch tube.

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

hangar, hanger - A "hangar" is a building, and a "hanger" is used for clothing.

HCC - helicopter control center

HCS - helicopter combat support squadron

helo - short, acceptable slang form of the word "helicopter"

homeport - One word in all uses:

- The Navy's newest homeport will be Detroit.
- The ship is homeported in San Diego.

HS - helicopter anti-submarine squadron

HSL - helicopter anti-submarine squadron light



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hull numbers - See entry for "ship names."

Humvee - a trademarked abbreviation used for High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV).

in country - Service members arrive in country. Once there, they have an in-country presence.

in port - Use as two words.

knot - A "knot" is one nautical mile (6,076.10 feet) per hour. It's redundant to say "knots per hour." Always use figures.

- Winds were at 7 to 9 knots; a 10-knot wind.

liaison - Use "liaison" as a noun. Do not use the verb form "liaise," as it is not usually used appropriately or well.

lifestyle - Use as one word.

Littoral combat ship - Do not capitalize.

- The littoral combat ship USS Freedom (LCS 1)...

Marines - This is a proper noun. Capitalize when referring to U.S. forces (the U.S. Marines, the Marine Corps). Do not use the abbreviation USMC.

maritime security operations - lowercase when spelled out, uppercase acronym (MSO).

maritime strategy - lowercase

Mark - Do not use "MK" when referring to the word "Mark" in weapons or equipment. (He worked on a Mark 50 torpedo.)

master chief petty officer - Refers to Navy or Coast Guard personnel in pay grade E-9.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy - Lowercase when referenced after an individual's name or when used alone. MCPON is the accepted abbreviation on 2nd reference.

men - Do not use "men" if referring to a group of persons made up of men and women, or a group of individuals whose genders are unknown. Use Sailors or Marines if the group is military.

MIA - Missing in Action. MIA is acceptable on first reference.



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midshipman - On first reference: Midshipman 1st Class John P. Jones (or 2nd Class, 3rd Class, 4th Class, if known). On subsequent reference(s): Jones.

- Note: military abbreviation is MIDN 1/C (or 2/C, 3/C, 4/C, respectively); 1/C are in their senior year of school (USNA or NROTC), 2/C are juniors, 3/C are sophomores, 4/C are freshmen. "Midshipman" is singular; "midshipmen" is plural; term applies to both male and female.

military rank – The first reference should include rank and first and last name. All subsequent references should be last name only.

- Always refer to Sailors by rank and not pay grade (e.g., Petty Officer 2nd Class or PO2, not E-5 - Capt. or captain, not O-6). Follow the guidelines in the AP Stylebook.

military titles/job titles - For enlisted personnel, spell out Petty Officer (1st, 2nd or 3rd) Class when directly preceding a name or petty officer(s) when generalizing.

military units - Use numerals for unit designations. See "aircraft," "fleets" and "ships."

millimeter - Abbreviate as "mm" with no space: 35mm film, 105mm Howitzer, 9mm service pistol

mine hunting - Use as two words.

minehunter - Use as one word.

missiles - Capitalize the proper name, but not the word missile: Titan II missile.

naval - lowercase

naval activities - Spell out on first reference and capitalize only when part of a proper name:

- Naval Station Rota, Spain

On second reference, abbreviate as follows:

- naval station - NAVSTA
- naval air station - NAS
- naval weapons station - NWS
- naval amphibious base - NAB
- naval air facility - NAF
- construction battalion center - CBC



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Navy Reserve - Capitalize when referring to the specific organization. Capitalize "Reserve" when referencing the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Navywide - Use as one word and always capitalize.

numbered fleets - Always refer to as digits and precede with "U.S."

- The ship is assigned to U.S. 6th Fleet.

OEF, OIR - Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Inherent Resolve. Do not add any number to these titles based on rotation status.

officer in charge - Do not hyphenate.

offload/off-load - One word as a noun and hyphenate as a verb. Do not use "upload" or "download"

- The offload took 12 hours.
- Deck department prepared to offload pallets.

pay grade - Use as two words. Designations such as O-3, E-6, etc., are only used in reference to pay grades.

pendant - A short line and hooking device used to secure large objects (e.g., a cargo pallet or boat) to a towing or hoisting line.

pennant - A long, tapering flag used for signaling and/or identification.

percentages - Use figures.

- The crew's donation to Toys for Tots increased 20 percent.

Persian Gulf - use Arabian Gulf. "Gulf" is acceptable in second reference. Note: The Arabian Sea is its own body of water and should not be confused with references to the Arabian Gulf.

petty officer - Applies to Sailors or Coast Guardsmen in pay grades E-4 to E-6.

pierside - Use as one word

plankowner - One word.



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Pre-Commissioning Unit – Use for a ship not yet commissioned.

- “The littoral combat ship Pre-Commissioning Unit (PCU) Little Rock is undergoing acceptance trials.”

pre-positioned - Hyphenate when referencing equipment or ships placed somewhere at an earlier date.

Supplies and equipment were pre-positioned in the Gulf.

punctuation - When typing copy, leave only one space after all forms of punctuation. Follow guidelines in AP Stylebook

quotation marks - The period and comma always go within the quotation marks. The dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.

- USS Defender (MCM 2) was awarded the Battle 'E.'
- "The crew performed superbly," said Lt. Cmdr. Charlie Brown.

rate – No longer used

reenlist - Do not hyphenate between the double vowel.

refueling complex overhaul (RCOH) - lowercase when spelled out, uppercase acronym

replenishment-at-sea - lowercase; hyphenate

Reserve, Reservist(s) - Capitalize "Reserve" when referencing the U.S. Navy Reserve.

retired - Use retired before rank/rate and name. Do not capitalize. Do not use abbreviated after a name.

- They invited retired Petty Officer 1st Class John D. Writer.

Sailor - "Sailor" is to be capitalized in all references except those who belong to foreign navies or merchant/civilian references.

Sea Hawk - Two words

SEAL - Sea, Air, Land. SEAL is acceptable on first reference. If plural, use SEALs.

Secretary of the Navy - Lowercase when referenced after an individual's name or when used alone. SECNAV is the accepted abbreviation on 2nd reference.



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service members - Use as two words.

ship names - For first reference always include USS, the ship's name and the hull number: USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75).

- Exceptions: Do not use "USS" for ships before 1909, or if it is not yet in commission, or has been decommissioned and you are referring to the ship in its present state.
- There is no hyphen in the hull number. On second reference, use only the ship's name or reference as "the ship". Do not use "the" in front of a ship's name: "USS San Jose," not "the USS San Jose." Use "the" before the ship type: "the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77).

Ships' nicknames – Do not use. "The aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) is underway. Dwight D. Eisenhower will deploy to the U.S. 5th Fleet." Use only official names of ships, aircraft or people.

Ship names are not in all caps. Use USS Seattle, not USS SEATTLE.

spokesperson - "Spokesman" or "spokeswoman" is preferred. Use "spokesperson" only if the gender of the individual is unknown. If possible, use a generic term instead: public affairs officer, representative, etc.

squadrons - Spell out on first reference and use numerals for the squadron's number: Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron (VQ) 1. On second reference, use the abbreviation (with a dash), e.g. VQ-1.

stand down/standdown - One word when used as a noun. Two words when used as a verb.

- The safety standdown was held Nov. 4.
- The officer in charge told him to stand down.

state names - See AP Stylebook.

Submarine Force - use upper case when referring to Submarine Force

SUBRON – submarine squadron

team member - Use as two words.

theater security cooperation - lowercase when spelled out, uppercase acronym (TSC)

time - Do not use military time unless quoted.



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titles - Capitalize titles when used before a name only. See titles entry in AP Stylebook.

undersecretary - Use as one word.

underway - Use as one word.

VAQ - electronic attack squadron

VAW - carrier airborne early warning squadron

VFA - strike fighter squadron

VMFA - Marine strike fighter attack squadron

VP - patrol squadron

VRC - fleet logistics support squadron

VS - sea control squadron

VT – training squadron

warfare qualifications – Do not include.

warfighter - Use as one word.

washdown - use as one word

watchstander, watchstanding - Use as one word.

wide - nationwide, Navywide, fleetwide

woman, women - Preferred to "female."