



# A GUIDE TO THE RANK AND TITLES OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

by Melody Allen McBeth







# THE U.S. UNIFORMED SERVICES GUIDE TO RANKS

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## About the Author

Melody McBeth is the founder and principal of Highland Advancement Solutions, a full service consulting agency serving the development operations needs of nonprofit organizations.

Melody has more than 20 years of experience in the nonprofit realm where she has served in a variety of roles from frontline solicitor and event manager to volunteer coordinator. For seven years prior to starting her firm she was the database administrator for an education NPO, and since has assisted a diverse cross-section of organizations with their operational and data standardization needs.

Melody won the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Circle of Excellence Silver Award in 2013 for Advancement Services Programs Overall Operations as a co-author of the Children's National Health System's Data Integrity Campaign. She has always been involved in her communities having held state office with the Pennsylvania Jaycees and more recently, chairing committees for the Association of Advancement Services Professionals (AASP). Each organization recognized her contributions by awarding her their Volunteer of the Year accolade. She presents frequently at industry conferences and is a sought-after keynote speaker. She has been nominated to the AASP Board of Directors.

Prior to her involvement with nonprofit organizations Melody held various positions in retail and restaurant management and managed a karate studio. She and her husband of 36 years met while they were both in the U.S. Army studying at the Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California. As a brat and a veteran herself, Melody understands the strength and commitment of the military community.

She and her breadman husband live in South Central Pennsylvania. She enjoys spending time with their three precocious grandchildren and her various clients – not always in that order.

## Acknowledgments

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To the memory of my dad, MSG Clifford L. Allen, USA(Ret).

## Forward

This book came about because of a strange question. As the only veteran in the office I was once asked, “Hey Mel, what do you call a Brigadier General?”

Understand, please, that I had no context – so my answer was truly an ingrained reaction when I said “Sir?”

That obviously was not what caused the query – the person was really asking me how a letter to a Brigadier General should be addressed, both on the external envelope (the addressee) and the internal letter (the salutation). Once that was established the conversation became one of how to speak to military personnel in a social setting; really knowing what to call a Brigadier General.

Through the years and the clients in many, many places, I have come to learn this problem is fairly universal to fundraising operations. I even once had a retired Air Force Major (Maj) threaten to withdraw her support of the organization I was assisting because they kept sending her mail addressed to a MAJ (an Army correct capitalization). Just as those of us who suffer the indignity of being constantly called the wrong name (I’m Melody, not Melanie nor Melny), so too do our military folks like to see it done correctly. It’s very important to get it right!



## Special Note

This is a rank and reference guide to the Uniformed Services of the United States of America. Every effort has been made to provide absolutely accurate information.

There are currently seven federal uniformed services: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps. The first five are more commonly known as the Armed Services.

### **Capitalization is key!**

All written rank capitalization should be strictly adhered to as presented in this guide.



## Armed Services

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# United States Army

## Enlisted

		Written Rank	Used in speaking
E-1	Private	PVT	private
E-2	Private 2nd class	PV2	private
E-3	Private First Class	PFC	private
E-4	Spec-4	SPC	specialist

## non-commissioned officers

E-4	Corporal	CPL	corporal
E-5	Sergeant	SGT	sergeant
E-6	Staff Sergeant	SSG	sergeant
E-7	Sergeant First Class	SFC	sergeant
E-8	Master Sergeant	MSG	sergeant
E-8	First Sergeant	1SG	first sergeant
E-9	Sergeant Major	SGM	sergeant major
E-9	Command Sergeant Major	CSM	sergeant major

## Officers

### warrant

W-1	Warrant Officer 1	WO1	Mr./Ms.
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	CW2	Mr./Ms. or "Chief"
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	CW3	Mr./Ms. or "Chief"
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	CW4	Mr./Ms. or "Chief"
W-5	Chief Warrant Officer 5	CW5	Mr./Ms. or "Chief"

## USA Officers Continued

### commissioned

O-1	Second Lieutenant	2LT	lieutenant
O-2	First Lieutenant	1LT	lieutenant
O-3	Captain	CPT	captain
O-4	Major	MAJ	major
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	LTC	colonel
O-6	Colonel	COL	colonel
O-7	Brigadier General	BG	general
O-8	Major General	MG	general
O-9	Lieutenant General	LTG	general
O-10	General	GEN	general

special	Cadet	CDT	cadet
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USAR = US Army Reserves

USA(R) or USA(Ret) = US Army Retired



# United States Navy

## Enlisted

		Written Rank	Used in Speaking
E-1	Seaman Recruit	SR	seaman
E-2	Seaman Apprentice	SA	seaman
E-3	Seaman	SN	seaman

## non-commissioned officers

E-4	Petty Officer 3rd Class	PO3	petty officer
E-5	Petty Officer 2nd Class	PO2	petty officer
E-6	Petty Officer 1st Class	PO1	petty officer
E-7	Chief Petty Officer	CPO	chief
E-8	Senior Chief Petty Officer	SCPO	senior chief
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer	MCPO	master chief

## Officers

### warrant

W-1	Warrant Officer 1	WO1	Mr./Ms.
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	CWO2	Mr./Ms.
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	CWO3	Mr./Ms.
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	CWO4	Mr./Ms.
W-5	Chief Warrant Officer 5	CWO5	Mr./Ms.

**USN Officers Continued**  
**commissioned**

O-1	Ensign	ENS	ensign
O-2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	LTJG	Mr./Ms.
O-3	Lieutenant	LT	lieutenant
O-4	Lieutenant Commander	LCDR	commander
O-5	Commander	CDR	commander
O-6	Captain	CAPT	captain
O-7	Rear Admiral (lower half)	RDML	admiral
O-8	Rear Admiral (upper half)	RADM	admiral
O-9	Vice Admiral	VADM	admiral
O-10	Admiral Chief of Naval Operations	ADM	admiral

special	Midshipman	MIDN	midshipman
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USNR = US Navy Reserves

USN(R) or USN(Ret) = US Navy Retired



# United States Marine Corps

## Enlisted

		Written Rank	Used in Speaking
E-1	Private	Pvt	private
E-2	Private First Class	PFC	private
E-3	Lance Corporal	LCpl	lance corporal

## non-commissioned officers

E-4	Corporal	Cpl	corporal
E-5	Sergeant	Sgt	sergeant
E-6	Staff Sergeant	SSgt	staff sergeant
E-7	Gunnery Sergeant	GySgt	gunnery sergeant
E-8	Master Sergeant	MSgt	master sergeant
E-8	First Sergeant	1stSgt	first sergeant
E-9	Master Gunnery Sergeant	MGySgt	master gunnery sergeant
E-9	Sergeant Major	SgtMaj	sergeant major

## Officers

### warrant

W-1	Warrant Officer 1	WO	Chief
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	CWO2	Chief
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	CWO3	Chief
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	CWO4	Chief
W-5	Chief Warrant Officer 5	CWO5	Chief

**USMC Officers Continued**  
**commissioned**

O-1	Second Lieutenant	2ndLt	second lieutenant
O-2	First Lieutenant	1stLt	lieutenant
O-3	Captain	Capt	captain
O-4	Major	Maj	major
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	LtCol	lieutenant colonel
O-6	Colonel	Col	colonel
O-7	Brigadier General	BGen	brigadier general
O-8	Major General	MajGen	major general
O-9	Lieutenant General	LtGen	lieutenant general
O-10	General	Gen	general

USMCR = US Marine Corps Reserves

USMC(R) or USMC(Ret) = US Marine Corps Retired





# United States Air Force

## Enlisted

		Written Rank	Used in Speaking
E-1	Airman Basic	AB	airman
E-2	Airman	Amn	airman
E-3	Airman First Class	A1C	airman
E-4	Senior Airman	SrA	airman

## non-commissioned officers

E-5	Staff Sergeant	SSgt	sergeant
E-6	Technical Sergeant	TSgt	sergeant
E-7	Master Sergeant	MSgt	sergeant
E-8	Senior Master Sergeant	SMSgt	sergeant
E-9	Chief Master Sergeant	CMSgt	master sergeant
E-9	Command Chief Master Sergeant	CCM	master sergeant

## Officers

### commissioned

O-1	Second Lieutenant	2d Lt	lieutenant
O-2	First Lieutenant	1st Lt	lieutenant
O-3	Captain	Capt	captain
O-4	Major	Maj	major
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Lt Col	colonel
O-6	Colonel	Col	colonel
O-7	Brigadier General	Brig Gen	general
O-8	Major General	Maj Gen	general
O-9	Lieutenant General	Lt Gen	general
O-10	General Air Force Chief of Staff	Gen	general

special	Cadet	Cadet	Cadet
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USAFR = US Air Force Reserves

USAF(R) or USAF(Ret) = US Air Force Retired



# United States Coast Guard

## Enlisted

		Written Rank	Used in Speaking
E-1	Seaman Recruit	SR	seaman
E-2	Seaman Apprentice	SA	seaman
E-2	Fireman Apprentice	FA	fireman
E-2	Airman Apprentice	AA	airman
E-3	Seaman	SN	seaman
E-3	Fireman	FN	fireman
E-3	Airman	AN	airman

## non-commissioned officers

E-4	Petty Officer 3rd Class	PO3	petty officer
E-5	Petty Officer 2nd Class	PO2	petty officer
E-6	Petty Officer 1st Class	PO1	petty officer
E-7	Chief Petty Officer	CPO	chief
E-8	Senior Chief Petty Officer	SCPO	senior chief
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer	MCPO	master chief

## Officers

### warrant

W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	CWO2	Mr./Ms.
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	CWO3	Mr./Ms.
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	CWO4	Mr./Ms.

**USCG Officers Continued**  
**commissioned**

O-1	Ensign	ENS	Mr./Ms.
O-2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	LTJG	Mr./Ms.
O-3	Lieutenant	LT	Mr./Ms.
O-4	Lieutenant Commander	LCDR	lieutenant commander
O-5	Commander	CDR	commander
O-6	Captain	CAPT	captain
O-7	Rear Admiral (lower half)	RDML	admiral
O-8	Rear Admiral (upper half)	RADM	admiral
O-9	Vice Admiral	VADM	admiral
O-10	Commandant of the Coast Guard	ADM	admiral

special	Cadet	CDT	cadet
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USCGR = US Coast Guard Reserves

USCG(R) or USCG(Ret) = US Coast Guard Retired

# Non-Combatant Uniformed Services

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# United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

## Officers

	commissioned	Written Rank	Used in Speaking
O-1	Ensign	ENS	Mr./Ms.
O-2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	LTJG	Mr./Ms.
O-3	Lieutenant	LT	lieutenant
O-4	Lieutenant Commander	LCDR	commander
O-5	Commander	CDR	commander
O-6	Captain	CAPT	captain
O-7	Rear Admiral (lower half)	RADM	admiral
O-8	Rear Admiral	RADM	admiral
O-9	Vice Admiral(Surgeon General)	VADM	admiral
O-10	Admiral (Asst. Sec for Health)	ADM	admiral



# National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps

## Officers

	commissioned	Written Rank	Used in Speaking
O-1	Ensign	ENS	Mr./Ms.
O-2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	LTJG	Mr./Ms.
O-3	Lieutenant	LT	Mr./Ms.
O-4	Lieutenant Commander	LCDR	lieutenant commander
O-5	Commander	CDR	commander
O-6	Captain	CAPT	captain
O-7	Rear Admiral (lower half)	RDML	admiral
O-8	Rear Admiral	RADM	admiral
O-9	Vice Admiral	VADM	admiral

## **Regarding uniformed medical and religious personnel:**

It is most proper to refer to these members of the Uniformed Services by their rank - **however**, some (religious personnel especially) may prefer their vocational title. Stewardship practices should allow for meeting the constituent's preferences.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. If I got something wrong (my apologies to my brothers and sisters), please bring the discrepancy to the attention of:

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**Melody McBeth**, founder of Highland Advancement Solutions and a proud U.S. Army veteran, has more than 20 years of experience in the nonprofit realm, where she has served in a variety of development and administrative positions. She uses her knowledge and skills to assist educational, health, and cultural organizations with operational and data standardization needs to fulfill their missions and serve the greater good.