

# Style Guide for Electronic Case Filing

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## Introduction

This guide contains the preferred style practices for all users of the CM/ECF application in the Western District of Texas. The intention of the guide is to make everyone's task easier, whether they are entering data or inquiring into the CM/ECF data base, or uploading a proposed order. The application of a common set of styles when creating docket entries results in information being captured and displayed in more uniform and predictable ways, thus reducing confusion and errors. In addition, style consistency is the key to efficient searches in CM/ECF, since successful queries require very exact matches on search data including punctuation, abbreviations, and upper or lower case characters.

## Adding Parties

Much of case opening in CM/ECF consists of adding the names of debtors, joint debtors, plaintiffs, and defendants to cases. As cases progress, creditors and other parties are added as well. Access to this information is vital to the court, the bar and the general public. *When adding new parties to the CM/ECF database, the names should conform with standard punctuation and spacing conventions listed in the Style Conventions for Names section of this Guide.*

## Searching For Parties

Before adding any party to a case, search for that party using appropriate "search clues". If the system finds the correct name, select it to help eliminate different versions of the same party name.

Even something as simple as "United States" can cause ambiguity if everyone is entering it differently. For instance, following this style guide can help avoid "United States" being in the database also as "UNITED STATES", "U.S.", "US", "USA", "U.S.A.", or "U.S. of A."

## Search Strategies

CM/ECF searches are not key word searches but require exact text matches.

- Be sure to use appropriate upper and lowercase characters since the search is case sensitive.
- When searching for debtors, the more search clues you provide, the more likely you are to find the exact person you are searching for. For example, if you search for a last name of Grant, CM/ECF may return a list of a hundred parties with that last name. However, if you search for a last name of Grant with a Social Security number of 333-22-1111, CM/ECF will return a single party.
- When searching for creditors, it may be necessary to conduct multiple searches. First, search for the entire creditor name (e.g., World Communications). If that is not successful,

you can search for part of the creditor's name (e.g., World Comm or just World). If there are articles in the title such as "A" or "The," you may or may not need to include the article in the search. For example, a search request for The Timely Times may not produce a result. But a search request for Timely Times will be successful. Likewise a search for Timely Times may not produce a result; but a search for The Timely Times will be successful.

- When searching for a Party **DO NOT** use an asterisk or star in the search criteria as follows:

Villa\*

Use of the asterisk slows down the entire system. When searching for Villareal, the name will be found without using the asterisk as follows:

Villa

- An unsuccessful search for A. & A. Metals might be successful if you search without punctuation (i.e., A & A Metals). On the other hand, an unsuccessful search for A & A Metals might be successful if you search with punctuation (i.e., A. & A. Metals).

## Adding Debtors

- Add debtors to cases using names and addresses exactly as they appear on the petition or complaint. In most cases, you will NOT find debtors or joint debtors when you search the CM/ECF database. You will have to add them to the database and the case as a new party.
- If a debtor has a title, add the title in the “party text” box. Any title that you add as party text will show up on the face of the docket report following the name and separated by a comma.

### Title Tips

1. The name of the debtor without the title will appear in docket text.
2. Titles will not appear on notices.
3. Titles will appear on the face of the docket report in upper and lower case following the debtor name as shown below:

Jose Garza, Administrator of the Estate of Sylvia Garza

Alamo Limestone, a Texas Corporation

Catherine V. Ruiz, Official Administrator of Lottery Winnings

- Make an entry in the SSN box or the Tax ID box even if the social security number for an individual debtor or tax identification number for a business debtor is unknown. Use the following format for unknown numbers.

SSN: 000-00-0000

Tax ID: 00-0000000

### Adding Plaintiffs and Defendants

- Add plaintiffs and defendants to cases using names exactly as they appear on the complaint. Or when you search for plaintiffs and defendants, you will probably find them in the database and can use the information in the database.
- Do NOT add any addresses for plaintiffs or defendants.
- Do NOT add a title for plaintiffs or defendants.
- Make sure to select the plaintiff or defendant party role. If you find a plaintiff or defendant in CM/ECF with an address, delete the address fields before accepting the Party Information screen.

### Adding Creditors

- Add creditors to cases using names already in the CM/ECF database if at all possible. When you search for a creditor, you will probably find the party in the CM/ECF data base.

Creditors (such as Ford Motor Credit) are added to many different cases. Ideally, there should be only one Ford Motor Credit party in the CM/ECF database. This greatly simplifies searching when adding parties and querying cases.

For instance, it is better to add Ford Motor Credit to all cases even if that is not the exact name used on a document being docketed. The idea is to avoid adding name variations for a single creditor. For example:

( Ford Motor Credit

;	Ford Motor Credit Company	;	Ford Motor Company
;	Ford Motor Credit Co.	;	Ford Motor Credit Corp.
;	Ford Motor Credit Corporation	;	Ford Motors Credit Company
;	Ford Motor Credit Company, Inc.	;	Ford Motor Credit Company (“FMCC”)

The proliferation of different names for the same creditor makes searching frustrating and time consuming.

- Do not add mailing addresses for creditors. If you find a creditor in CM/ECF with an address, delete the address fields before accepting the Party Information screen.
- Do NOT add a title for creditors.
- Make sure to select the creditor party role.

## **Style Conventions for Names**

These style conventions apply to all names entered in the CM/ECF application.

- Use upper and lower case characters for all names and capitalize the first letter in a proper noun.  
  
Wallace D. Smith  
United Services Fidelity and Guaranty
- Use punctuation and single spacing between all names and following initials and periods.  
  
J. J. Jones  
Smith, Inc.  
C. W. Bradford, Ltd.
- When typing names that have upper and lower case letters or hyphens, do not insert spaces.  
  
Patricia DeLaGarza  
Patrick MacDougal  
Kathleen O'Brien  
Mary Smith-Baker
- If an individual does not have a middle name, leave that field blank.  
  
Do not enter "NMI" (no middle initial).
- If a party has multiple names such as Robert Kramer Johns Martin, add the extra names in the Middle Name box.  
  
Last name:           Martin  
Middle name:       Kramer Johns  
First name:         Robert

- Business names should be entered entirely in the Last Name box. Do not use the First Name or Middle Name box when entering business names.
- Do not use the ampersand sign for “and” unless it is part of a company name on the petition or pleading.

B. & D. Company  
Cameron & Associates  
J & J Trucking

- Avoid abbreviations unless it is part of a company name on the petition or pleading.

( Ford Motor Company	;	Ford Motor Co.
( First Federal Association	;	1 <sup>st</sup> Federal Assoc.

- Enter U.S. and U.S.A. without any spaces.

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Trustee  
U.S. Attorney  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

## Style Conventions for Addresses

These style conventions apply to all debtor addresses and creditor matrix addresses entered in the CM/ECF application.

- Addresses must not exceed four (4) lines. The party name and address must not exceed five (5) lines.
- Abbreviate post office addresses without a space between the P and O.

P.O. Box 1359  
P.O. Drawer 34321

- Use digits for numbers in addresses.

3224 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street  
425 6th Street  
1 Valley Plaza

- When there is a street address as well as a post office box address for a debtor, add only the post office address.

John J. Johnson  
P. O. Box 1477  
4218 Elmwood Lane *(Elimate this line)*  
Bentonville, AR 40453

- When needed, use the second and/or third line of the address for building name, suite number, floor, firm name, or attention.

Arthur Andersen and Associates  
Attention: Terri Brooks  
John Hancock Building, Suite 2600  
8723 Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60604

- The city, state, and zip code must be the only information on the last address line.
- Use the full nine-digit zip code if at all possible.
- Foreign addresses must have the full name of the post office and country of destination printed in capital letters.
- The country name or APO destination must be the only information on the bottom line of the address.

Alfonso Diaz  
Rio de Danubec y Rio Florido  
CD. JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA  
MEXICO #1050

Sgt. John Smith  
C Company 237 Armor  
Unit #21103, Box 512  
APO, AE 09014

- If the address contains an apartment number or suite number, you may use the # sign in place of the word number or suite.

Barbara Bixby  
322 West Shady Lane, # 334  
Austin, TX 78701



- Use c/o to indicate “In Care Of”.  
  
Manuel Ortega, Jr.  
c/o Manuel Ortega, Sr.  
6612 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
El Paso, TX 79901
- The preferred format for telephone numbers is (210) 261-3851.

## **Creditor Matrix Specification**

- Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least one (1) inch.
- Each creditor must be separated by at least one blank line.
- Do not include page numbers, headers, footers, etc.
- All entries should conform to the style specifications in the Style Guide.
- The name and address of each creditor must be five (5) lines or less.
- The “name” line may contain no more than 50 characters including blanks.
- Each address line may contain no more than 40 characters including blanks.
- Names and addresses should be left justified (flush against the left margin, no leading blanks.)
- Account numbers or “attention” lines should be placed on the second line of the name / address.
- City, state, and zip code must be on the last line.
- There must be a comma placed immediately after the city name
- All states must be the two-letter U.S. Postal Code abbreviations.
- Nine-digit zip codes must be typed with a hyphen separating the two groups of digits.

## Orders

All orders must conform with the following format requirements:

- The top margin on the FIRST PAGE must be four (4) inches. All other pages of the order will have a top margin of one inch.
- To assist the court in verifying that the “entire” body of the submitted order has been properly transmitted, the LAST LINE in the order must be three (3) pound symbols (###), centered in the middle of the page, to indicate the order is completed.
- A line for the date and a signature line for the judge is omitted. All orders will be signed electronically by the judge in the space provided by the top margin on the first page.
- All orders prepared by legal counsel shall indicate the name of the law firm, name of the attorney responsible for the order, mailing address and phone number for the firm and, if desired, the fax number and/or e-mail address. This information shall be included on the order, after the line containing the three (3) pound symbols.
- If the submitting party wishes to indicate to whom copies of the signed order should be sent, those parties names and addresses shall be included on the order, after the line containing the three (3) pound symbols.
- The fonts used with Adobe Acrobat Writer version 3 or 4 must be Courier, Helvetica, or Times New Roman (Regular, bold, italic, and bold italic). The fonts used with Adobe Acrobat Writer version 5 must be Arial, Courier, or Times New Roman (Regular, bold, italic, and bold italic). Other fonts will not process correctly through the court’s noticing center.
- Orders to pay wages and applications to pay filing fee in installments are considered administrative orders and the current procedure for attaching these documents to the docket entry remains in effect.

## Abbreviations

### States and Territories

AL	Alabama	MT	Montana
AK	Alaska	NE	Nebraska
AZ	Arizona	NV	Nevada
AR	Arkansas	NH	New Hampshire
AS	American Samoa	NJ	New Jersey
CA	California	NM	New Mexico
CO	Colorado	NY	New York
CT	Connecticut	NC	North Carolina
DE	Delaware	ND	North Dakota
DC	District of Columbia	CM	N. Mariana Isl.
FL	Florida	OH	Ohio
GA	Georgia	OK	Oklahoma
GU	Guam	OR	Oregon
HI	Hawaii	TT	Palau
ID	Idaho	PA	Pennsylvania
IL	Illinois	PR	Puerto Rico
IN	Indiana	RI	Rhode Island
IA	Iowa	SC	South Carolina
KS	Kansas	SD	South Dakota
KY	Kentucky	TN	Tennessee
LA	Louisiana	TX	Texas
ME	Maine	UT	Utah
TT	Marshall Island	VT	Vermont
MD	Maryland	VA	Virginia
MA	Massachusetts	VI	Virgin Islands
MX	Mexico	WA	Washington
MI	Michigan	WV	West Virginia
TT	Micronesia	WI	Wisconsin
MS	Mississippi	WY	Wyoming
MO	Missouri		

### Geographic Directions

North	=	N.	Northeast	=	N.E.
South	=	S.	Southwest	=	S.W.
East	=	E.	Southeast	=	S.E.
West	=	W.	Northwest	=	N.W.

## Street Designators

In general it is best to type out the entire name of the street designator. If there is a necessity to abbreviate, use the following:

Avenue	Ave.
Boulevard	Blvd.
Highway	Hwy.
Interstate Highway	I.H.
Lane	Ln.
Street	St.
Road	Rd.