

**Style Guide  
For  
Electronic Case Filing**  
V11/2003



This guide contains the preferred style practices for all users of the CM/ECF application in the Northern District of Florida. 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. 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 the CM/ECF, since successful queries require very exact matches on search data including punctuation, abbreviations and upper or lower case.

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## Adding Parties

***When Adding New Parties to the CM/ECF Data Base, the Names Should Conform with Standard Punctuation and Spacing Conventions Listed in the Style Conventions for Names section of this Guide.***

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.

### 1. Searching For Parties

***Make sure you search the CM/ECF data base for the party you want to add to a case.***

Before adding any party to a case, search for that party using name, social security number or tax ID number “search clues” where appropriate. 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, the style guide can help avoid “United States” being in the data base also as “UNITED STATES”, “U.S.”, “US”, “USA”, “U.S.A.”, or “U.S. of A.”

### 2. Debtors

***a. 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 data base. You will have to add them to the data base and the case as a new party.

***b. 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.

Party Text

1. The name of the debtor without the title will appear in docket text.
2. Party Text will not appear on notices.
3. Party Text 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 Florida Corporation

Catherine V. Ruiz, Official Administrator of Lottery Winnings

***c. 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.***

SSN:           000-00-0000  
Tax ID:        00-0000000

### 3. Parties and Creditors

***a. Add creditors to cases using names already in the CM/ECF data base if at all possible.*** [IMPORTANT: this is when adding a creditor as a party for motion purposes. This step does add them officially to the case's creditor matrix. To do so, you must file a Notice of Appearance and Request for Notice and pay any required fee. The Court will then add your creditor to the matrix.

When adding a creditor (such as Ford Motor Credit), they are typically already added to many different cases. Ideally, there should be only one Ford Motor Credit party in the CM/ECF data base. 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 (preferred style)
- Ford Motor Credit Company

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

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

**b. 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. (Click the **Clear** button.)

**(NOTE: If pro se, add mailing address.)**

**c. Do NOT add a title for creditors.**

**d. Make sure to select the creditor party role.**

e. When **adding an address for a creditor or business, DO NOT add the address c/o** of a particular person because employees change. The mailing address should begin on the ADDRESS1 field.

Example: Florida Fishing Company  
c/o Jane Doe  
Bankruptcy Department

Enter as: Florida Fishing Company  
c/o Bankruptcy Department

f. When **adding a husband and wife to the database** that are listed only as Mr. & Mrs. John Doe, they should be entered as:

Last Name: Doe  
First Name: John & Mrs. [note: this is only one entry for two persons]

g. When **adding a wife or widow to the database** when the name is given as “Mrs. John Doe” without stating the woman’s first name, it should be entered as:

Last Name: Doe  
First Name: John (Mrs.)

h. If a party has an aka of Jr. the aka should be entered with Junior spelled out.

Example: John Smith aka Jr. (or Jr. Smith)  
Last Name: Smith  
First Name: Junior

i. When a creditor is acting in the capacity as a trustee DO NOT put “as Trustee for” in the name field. “Trustee for \_\_\_\_\_” should be entered in the party text field.

Last Name: Doe  
First Name: John  
Party Text Field: Trustee for Michael Doe

j. When adding a professional such as a doctor, dentist, etc., they should be added [if an individual] with:

Last Name: Doe  
First Name: John  
Party Text Field: John Doe, MD

#### 4. Plaintiffs and Defendants

***a. Add plaintiffs and defendants to cases using names exactly as they appear on the complaint.***

When you search for plaintiffs and defendants, you will probably find them in the data base.

***b. Do not add any addresses for plaintiffs or defendants.***

***c. Do NOT add a title for plaintiffs or defendants.***

***d. 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 (Click the **Clear** button.)

#### 5. Law Firms

***a. If an attorney is with a firm or is practicing alone, “Attorney at Law” or “Firm Name” should be entered in the OFFICE field.***

Tracy F. Bagwell  
Attorney at Law (Office Field)  
3333 College Road (Address 1)  
P.O. Box 11897 (Address 2)  
Tallahassee, FL 32312

**b. *Never*** enter a party to a case with c/o [Attorney or Law Firm]. Add the parties name then add the attorney or firm on the attorney screen.

**c. *Never*** code an attorney's address as "Returned". Notify the Systems Department.

## Style Conventions for Names

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

**a. *Use upper and lower case for all names and capitalize the first letter in a proper noun.***

Wallace D. Smith  
United Services Fidelity and Guaranty

**b. *Use punctuation and single spacing between all names and following initials and periods.***

J. J. Jones  
Smith, Inc.  
C. W. Bradford, Ltd.

**c. *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

**d. *If an individual does not have a middle name, leave that field blank.***

Do not enter "NMI" (no middle initial).

**e. *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

***f. 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.

***g. 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

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

Florida Car Co. should be  Florida Car Company  
1<sup>st</sup> Federal Assoc. should be  First Federal Association

***i. Enter U.S. and U.S.A. without any spaces.***

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs  
U.S. Trustee  
U.S. Attorney  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

***j. Enter County agencies/authorities noting the county first.***

Escambia County Tax Collector  
Leon County Tax Collector

## **Style Conventions for Addresses**

(These style conventions apply to all addresses entered in the CM/ECF application)

***a. Abbreviate post office addresses without a space between the P and O.***

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

**b. Use digits for numbers in addresses.**

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

**c. 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  
**(Eliminate this line)** 4218 Elmwood Lane  
Gainesville, FL 30303

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

BearingPoint Management Consultants  
Attention: Terri Brooks  
John Hancock Building, Suite 2600  
8723 Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60604

**e. The city, state and zip must be the only information on the last address line.**

**f. Use the full ten 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.**

**g. 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

***h. 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  
Panama City, FL 32333

***i. 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

***j. The preferred format for telephone numbers is (850) 261-3851.***

## Abbreviations

### States & 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	Florida
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.  
South = S.  
East = E.  
West = W.

Northeast = N.E.  
Southwest = S.W.  
Southeast = S.E.  
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.

## Invalid Characters

The following characters **CANNOT** be used in CM/ECF, either in text, addresses or creditor processing.

“%” - Must be spelled out “percent” or use c/o for care of  
“@” - Must spell out “at”  
“~” - Do not use  
“\$” - Do not use

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR CREDITOR MATRIX DISKETTE (Ver. 11/04/03)

### **If using a third party software package (i.e. Best Case Solutions, Specialty, EZ-Filing for Windows, Top Form):**

1. Save the creditors to a diskette. Name the file, i.e. creditor.txt.
2. Close your program and open your word processing package.
3. Open the creditor.txt file and check the following:
  - ✓ Text is **NOT** all caps – needs to be keyed as would in a document (i.e. Smith)
  - ✓ Single column
  - ✓ Two blank spaces between each creditor
  - ✓ Second line of each creditor must be either a street address number or a P.O. Box with the periods (e.g. 200 South Main Street or P.O. Box 241)
  - ✓ Last line of each creditor must be in the format City, State (two-letter abbreviation) Zip (e.g. Tallahassee, FL 32301)
  - ✓ No account numbers may be included in creditor information
4. Choose 'Save As' function in your word processing software. In most software packages, there will be a box that will indicate the format of the document (e.g. Word Document, WordPerfect 6/etc.). This box is usually right underneath where you enter in the name of the file.

The file format should then be selected to be one of the following (depending on your software):

- ✓ ASCII DOS Text
- ✓ Plain DOS Text
- ✓ Text Only

These are the only formats that will be accepted. When you have selected the correct format, save the file.

### **If you are not using third party software:**

1. Open your word processing software and enter in the creditor information making sure that there is:
  - ✓ Use of regular text and **NOT** all caps (i.e. Smith)
  - ✓ One column of information only
  - ✓ Two blank spaces between each creditor
  - ✓ Second line of each creditor must be either a street address number or a P.O. box with the periods (e.g. 200 South Main Street or P.O. Box 241)
  - ✓ Last line of each creditor must be in the format City, State (two-letter abbreviation) Zip (e.g. Tallahassee, FL 32301)
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