

U.S. Bankruptcy Court
Western District of New York

ECF Style Guide

This guide contains the preferred style practices for all of the CM/ECF application in the Western District of New York. The intention of the guide is to make everyone's task easier, whether they are entering data or inquiring into the CM/ECF database. 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.

The rule of thumb when using the CM/ECF application is to keep it simple. Using the least amount of punctuation and descriptive information as possible will further enhance uniformity.

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Adding Parties

When adding new parties to the CM/ECF database, the names should conform with punctuation and spacing conventions adopted by the Western District of New York Bankruptcy Court and listed in the Style Conventions for Names sections of this guide.

Most of case opening in CM/ECF consists of adding 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.

Searching for Parties

Make sure you search the CM/ECF database for a party before you add them to a case.

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

Search Strategies

CM/ECF searches 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 the last name of Grant, CM/ECF may return a list of a hundred parties with that last name. However, if you search for the last name of Grant with a social security number, CM/ECF will return a single party.
- When searching for creditors, it may be necessary to conduct multiple searches. First, search for the entire 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 not need to include the article in the search.

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

Villa*

Using an asterisk will slow down the entire system.

- Finally, an unsuccessful search for A & A Metals might be successful if you search without special characters (e.g., A and 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. One exception would be if the debtor and or joint debtor had previously filed a case.

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 is unknown.

SSN: 000-00-0000
Tax ID: 00-0000000000

Adding Plaintiffs and Defendants

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 database.

Make sure to select the plaintiff or defendant party role.

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 database.

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 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.

DO NOT add mailing addresses for creditors who have attorney representation.

DO NOT add titles 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 for all names and capitalize the first letter in a proper noun.

Wallace D Smith
United Services Fidelity and Guaranty

Use single spacing between all names.

JJ Jones
Smith Inc
C W Bradford Ltd

Note: *The preferred method of entry is to omit the use of any punctuation.*

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 or Middle name box when entering business names.

DO NOT use the ampersand sign for "and".

B and D Company
Cameron and Associates
J and J Trucking

Enter US without spaces.

US Department of Agriculture

Creditor/Party Filer Tips

1. Make sure you search for existing creditors before adding new creditors/parties to the database.
2. **DO NOT** use any punctuation when specifying names.
Examples: G.M.A.C.
GMAC Mortgage Corp.

Should be entered as **GMAC**
3. When a party conducts business at several locations, it is not necessary to include the name of the location in the name.
Example: Boatmen's National Bank of Belleville
Boatmen's National Bank of St. Louis

Should be entered as **Boatmens National Bank**
4. Try to make the name as short as possible. Shortening the name can prevent duplicates, prevent typographical errors, and enhance uniformity.
Example: American General Finance, Inc

Should be entered as **American General Finance**

Norwest Financial Illinois Inc,
Norwest Financial Illinois, Inc.

Should be entered as **Norwest Financial**
5. **DO NOT** include departments in the name.
Example: Magna Bank, c/o Asset Recovery Department

Should be entered as **Magna Bank**
6. All parties must be added individually.

Style Conventions for Addresses

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

Abbreviate post office addresses without periods or a space between the P and O

PO Box 1359
PO Drawer 34321

Use digits for numbers in addresses.

3224 E 26th St
425 6th St
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
PO Box 1477
4218 Elmwood Lane (Eliminate 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
Attn: Terri Brooks
John Hancock Building, Suite 2600
8723 Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60604

Note: *It is preferred that you:*

- ⊖ **DO NOT** include symbols such as c/o, &, %, #, etc.
- ⊖ **DO NOT** include department numbers or descriptions (e.g. Certified Public Accountant, Examiner).
- ⊖ **Never use the # symbol, simply type the number.**
- ⊖ **Avoid the use of building names, suite numbers, floor numbers, firm names, and attention to information.**

The city, state, and zip 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 all capital letters.

The country name of 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 simply type the number without the # symbol.*

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

The preferred format for telephone number is (210) 261-3851

Creditor Matrix Specification

Matrix files must be in ASCII DOS Text or Text only files.

Margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least on (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.

Each 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, *although the preferred method is that you omit account numbers and attention lines from the matrix.*

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 two-letter abbreviations.

Nine digit zip codes must be typed with a hyphen separating the two groups of digits.

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	Texas
ME	Maine	UT	Utah
TT	Marshall Island	VT	Vermont
MD	Maryland	VA	Virginia
MA	Massachusetts	VI	Virgin Island
MX	Mexico	WA	Washington
MI	Michigan	WV	West Virginia
TT	Micronesia	WI	Wisconsin
MS	Mississippi	WY	Wyoming
MO	Missouri		

Geographic Directions

North = N	Northeast = NE
South = S	Southwest = SW
East = E	Southeast = SE
West = W	Northwest = NW

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	Bld
Court	Ct
Drive	Dr
Expressway	Expwy
Highway	Hwy
Interstate Highway	IH
Lane	Ln
Parkway	Pkwy
Route	Route
Rural Route	RR
Street	St
Road	Road
Building	Bldg
Center	Center
Place	Place
Apartment	Apt
Saint	St
First	1 st
Second	2 nd
Third	3 rd