

# **THE ENSIGN Style Guide**

**Revised 8 Jan. 2015**

# THE ENSIGN Style Guide

Following is a list of style concerns common to THE ENSIGN magazine. It includes words and phrases unique to United States Power Squadrons and some common boating words and phrases. It is by no means complete.

For more information about USPS styles, see the Operations Manual.

Use The [AP Stylebook and Libel Manual](#), The [Chicago Manual of Style](#) and the [Merriam-Webster \(M-W\) Unabridged Dictionary](#) for items not covered here, for instance, state abbreviations.

## A

**acronyms** Usually, spell out on first reference, except where AP style indicates that it's OK on first reference. On subsequent references, use acronym. USPS is an exception in member-oriented materials; it's acceptable on all references. *The National Boating Federation awarded a USPS member...*

**active member** One who has earned 0-24 merit marks. Not a title, don't capitalize.

**ad hoc** Do not capitalize as part of committee name.

**advanced grades courses** Capitalize and spell out names of courses, but not the words "advanced grades" or "course." Refers to Seamanship, Piloting, Advanced Piloting, Junior Navigation and Navigation. Spell out course name on all references; do not refer to courses by grade designators: S, P, AP, JN, N or SN. *John Doe teaches Advanced Piloting and Seamanship.*

**Advanced Piloting course**

**Annual Meeting** Capitalize as part of a specific meeting's name. Don't capitalize otherwise: *Come to the 2014 Annual Meeting in Jacksonville, Fla. I attend the annual meeting every year. Annual meetings are held yearly.*

**AP** Advanced Pilot (grade). See **advanced grades courses, grades.**

**auxiliaries** Social groups attached to squadrons. Members may be USPS members but are not required to be.

**awards** Capitalize names of awards. For a list, see Operations Manual Appendix C at <http://www.usps.org/national/om/pdfs/opsmanac.pdf>.

## B

**boating class** A group of people taking a USPS public boating course.

**boating course** A generic term for a USPS or other public boating course, such as the USCGAux course. Do not capitalize. The USPS course is America's Boating Course; ABC on second reference.

**boat names** Boat names are always italicized. The word “the” may precede a boat name if “The” is actually painted on the transom. If a boat’s name is in all caps, change to upper- and lowercase. Boats are inanimate objects; therefore, they do not have a gender. All “she” references should be changed to “it.” Ship prefixes, such as SS or USS, are not italicized.

**Bowsprit, bowsprit** Not Bowspirit, bowspirit.

**bridge** The bridge is the part of the boat where the controls are and the captain does his work. USPS’ squadron, district and national boards of directors are called bridges. The national bridge is made up of the chief commander and five vice commanders. District bridges are made up of district commanders and district lieutenant commanders. Squadron bridges are made up of squadron commanders and lieutenant commanders.

**burgee** Triangular flag. Each USPS squadron has its own burgee. (Districts may have flags.)

**bylaws** or **USPS Bylaws** Capitalization used for official title of national organization’s bylaws, which are available at [http://www.usps.org/national/hq/documents/USPS\\_Bylaws.pdf](http://www.usps.org/national/hq/documents/USPS_Bylaws.pdf). When referring to squadron or other bylaws, do not capitalize. Always capitalize Model Squadron Bylaws or Model District Bylaws, which were created as a standard for squadrons and districts.

## C

**Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons** See CPS

**C/C** Rank of chief commander, the highest office in USPS. Use as title, not as noun in captions, tabular matter and Last Horizon. *C/C Farr addressed the Governing Board. Several former chief commanders attended.*

**Chairman** According to the USPS Operations Manual, a committee head is never called chair or chairwoman, even if that committee head is female. However, in *The Ensign*, chair is considered acceptable use. Chairman is not a title; USPS ranks should be used as titles in captions only: *Law Committee chair, R/C Jane Doe, SN.*

**Chief commander** See **C/C**. Capitalize when used as official title before a name: *Chief Commander John Doe.*

**“Committee on ...”** Phrase may be used only when part of the committee’s official name: *Committee on Nominations, Committee on Rules.*

**committee names** Capitalize the names of national committees. Do not include the word “National” unless it is part of the official title. See Stem to Stern or Operations Manual. Do not capitalize generic use of district or squadron committees. Spell out committee names on first reference; see Operations Manual for committee abbreviations that may be used, albeit sparingly, on subsequent references.

**Cooperative Charting** Capitalize on all references. Cooperative Charting is a joint effort between USPS and NOAA’s National Ocean Service (NOS) to

update both nautical and land charts.

**Course** Only capitalize when part of the official name.

**CPS** Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons. CPS and USPS often work together, but one is not a part of the other.

## D

**D/** Abbreviation for "district." Write out "District" and the number the first time a district is referred to within a story, and try to spell out "district" whenever it's used. Attributive (modifying) nouns are good places to use D/, as in *D/27 squadrons gathered...* Use "D/" in lists and ranks with names: *D/C Smith said...*, but never *Every D/C was at the meeting*. The abbreviation is also used in tabular matter.

**dates** The style is day of the week, date month year or date month year. *Saturday, 12 Sept. 2014, or 12 Sept. 2014.*

**Dinner-Dance** Capitalize when referring to specific national meeting's dinner-dance: *The 1998 Annual Meeting Dinner-Dance*. Otherwise, no caps: *We always enjoy going to the dinner-dance when we attend a national meeting. Our squadron throws a dinner-dance every year.*

**District** Capitalize when referring to a specific district. The organization is divided into 33 districts. Each district is made up of several squadrons. See *D/*. *District 27 squadrons gathered for a rendezvous. Resolutions approved at the district level may be submitted to the Governing Board for a vote.* There is no longer a District 18.

**dockside** One word per M-W

## E

**Educational Achievement Award** Completion of all advanced grades and elective courses. See **Senior Navigator** and **full certificate**.

**Educational Fund** Capitalize.

**elective courses** Capitalize course names, but not the words "elective courses;" these include Engine Maintenance, Marine Electronics, Cruise Planning, Weather, Sail, and Instructor Development.

**email** Follow AP style; do not hyphenate and do not use caps except at beginning of sentence.

**ensign** Insignia, flag or banner that shows who you are. Lowercase when referring to the USPS ensign, the national organization's flag.

**The Ensign** Title of magazine never italicized per AP.

**Expo** A gathering of national committees' displays at annual meetings. Capitalize, but don't run in all caps.

## F

**50-year member** Use numeral. Not a title, don't capitalize

**FC** Improper abbreviation of "full certificate."

**first-aid** (adj.), **first aid** (n.) per AP editor's guide

**full certificate** Used informally. See **Senior Navigator** and **FC**. One who has achieved a full certificate, the Educational Achievement Award, is called a Senior Navigator. The person has passed every USPS course. SN is the proper grade designation. In *The Ensign*, we use SN to show that someone has achieved the Educational Achievement Award in captions and Last Horizon.

**flags** The national flag is called the USPS ensign. Some districts have flags.

## G

**Governing Board** Capitalize. Spell out; don't use "GB." The Governing Board is a group of members, including squadron commanders, who have a vote at the national level.

**Governing Board meeting** - There is only one Governing Board meeting each year. Capitalize entire name of meeting when referring to specific meeting: *I attended the Governing Board Meeting in Atlanta.* But only capitalize Governing Board when using in a generic sense: *If you ever go to a Governing Board meeting, take your uniform.*

**Governing Board member emeritus** Not a title, only capitalize "Governing Board." A Governing Board member emeritus is one who has been awarded 50 merit marks.

**GPS** Acceptable in all references to a global positioning system.

**grades** Grades come after the person's name in captions and Last Horizon only. They are S (Seaman), P (Pilot), AP (Advanced Pilot), JN (Junior Navigator), N (Navigator) and SN (Senior Navigator). Set off with commas before and after: *P/C/C John Doe III, SN, addressed the Governing Board.* Grade abbreviations are not nouns. *All the pilots there...*, not *All the Ps there.*

## H

**headquarters** Never capitalize when used alone; never use "HQ." We are at USPS Headquarters or national headquarters. Some squadrons have headquarters buildings. This rule is much abused.

**Highway Mariners** A group of members who drive their recreational vehicles to national meetings.

## I

**Inland Rules** Capitalize.

**insignia** Singular and plural.

**Internet** Capitalize per AP.

## J

**Jet-Ski** Use “personal watercraft” or “PWC” on second reference; both are plural and singular. Jet-Ski is a registered trademark.

**JN** Junior Navigator grade. See advanced grades courses, grades.

## K

## L

**learning guides** This term is no longer used. See USPS guides.

**life member** Not a title; don’t capitalize. One who has earned at least 25 merit marks. Life members no longer have to pay annual national dues.

**loran-C** Not all caps, no need to capitalize unless at beginning of sentence. The government has phased out this positioning system.

## M

**Members Fund** Capitalize, no apostrophe

**Meritorious Service Plaques**

**Model Squadron Bylaws** Capitalize. Model Squadron Bylaws were created as a standard for squadrons to conform to. See **Bylaws**.

**MRAA** Marine Retailers Association of the Americas. Spell out on first reference.

## N

**N** Navigator grade. See **advanced grades courses, grades**.

**NASBLA** National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. Spell out on first reference.

**National** Do not use as part of committee name, as in “National Communications Committee,” unless part of official name. See Stem to Stern or the Operations Manual.

**national bridge** The chief commander and the five vice commanders

**Navigation Rules** Capitalize. U.S. Coast Guard regulations

**NBF** National Boating Federation. Spell out on first reference.

**N Club** A group of members who have achieved grade of Navigator.

**NMMA** National Marine Manufacturers Association. Spell out on first reference.

**NOAA** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Spell out on first reference.

**nonprofit** Don't hyphenate adjective or noun.

**NOS** National Ocean Service. Spell out on first reference.

**Numbers** Follow AP style first and then Chicago MOS for items not covered by AP. In general, spell out one through nine, use numbers for 10 or more. For units of measurement, including units of time, use numbers for everything, except fractions of units less than one, unless other spelled-out numbers appear in the sentence. Stargazer copy and other tabular matter are exceptions to this rule.

Examples:

- one-quarter pound of crabmeat
- 1¼ miles
- 20 ounces
- 12 hours, 3 minutes, 7 seconds

**NWS National Weather Service.** Spell out on first reference.

## O

**onboard** *adj.*, **on board** *adv.*

**online** *adj.* and *adv.*

**Operations Manual** Capitalize the USPS rulebook available at <http://www.usps.org/national/om/html/download.htm>.

**Operations Training** Seminar open to squadron members; no grade is given for it. Teaches how organization works at squadron, district and national levels.

## P

**P** Pilot grade. See advanced grades courses, grades.

**P/** "Past." May be used before a rank to signify person achieved that rank and finished time in office. Used in captions and Last Horizon.

**personal watercraft** Spell out on first reference. Singular and plural. Acronym is PWC, singular and plural. Not synonymous with Jet-Ski. Jet-Ski is a registered trademark of Kawasaki Inc.

**PFD** Personal flotation device. Avoid this term; use life jacket instead.

**port captain** Not a title; do not capitalize. Port captains are listed in Port Captains Directory at

<http://www.usps.org/x/logpage.cgi?PortC/member/main.html>; login using headquarters login. Port captains offer their expertise on local waterways to other USPS members who travel in their area.

**powerboat** One word.

**PR** Public relations. Spell out noun, abbreviate adjective. *PR materials are available. Public relations is important to USPS.*

**program** Don't capitalize unless part of official title.

**Public relations** See **PR**.

**PWC** See personal watercraft.

## Q

## R

**radar** Not RADAR

**raft-up** A group of boats tied to one boat that is anchored out. Note hyphen.

**ranks** Ranks go before names in captions and Last Horizon entries. No periods. See Operations Manual for list of ranks. Abbreviations are used as titles with names only, not as nouns. *P/C/C Smith was at the meeting, but not P/C/Cs present were...*

**rear commander** See R/C.

**R/C** Rear commander. Use abbreviation as a title only, not as a noun. Rear commanders chair national committees.

**rendezvous** Singular and plural. Social event. Members of squadrons may gather for a squadron rendezvous, squadrons may gather for district rendezvous.

**right-of-way** Note hyphens.

**rode** Rope by which a boat is anchored.

**round-trip** *adj.*, **round trip** *n.*

**Rules of the Road** Always capitalize. Refers to proper boat handling rules, both the Inland Rules and Navigational Rules.

## S

**S** Seaman grade. See **advanced grades courses, grades**.

**sailboat** One word

**S/C** Improper abbreviation of squadron commander. The proper way to designate a squadron commander's rank is "Cdr."

**sea cock** Two words per M-W

**Seamanship course**

**senior member** One who has earned five merit marks. Not a rank. Don't capitalize.

**Senior Navigator** Members achieve Senior Navigator status after achieving the Educational Achievement Award (completing all the advanced grades and elective courses), commonly referred to as a full certificate. This grade is designated by SN after the member's name in captions and Last Horizon.



**sextant** Navigational tool used in celestial navigation

**she** Do not refer to boats (or countries or states) as she. Use it as boats are inanimate objects.

**single sideband** See **SSB**

**SN** Senior Navigator grade. See **Senior Navigator, advanced grades courses, grades, FC.**

**The Squadron Boating Course** Original USPS basic boating course. No longer offered.

**squadrons** On first reference, write the squadron's full name as shown in squadron bylaws or USPS database: *Raleigh Sail & Power Squadron*. In subsequent reference use *squadron* or *Raleigh Squadron*, but not *RSPS*. See the Membership Department for a current list and current number of squadrons. Squadrons can also be found online at <http://www.usps.org/cgi-bin-nat/tools/pages.cgi?slocate>.

**SSB** Single sideband. Hyphenate when used as adjective: *single-sideband radio*. Spell out on first reference.

**staff commander** Assistant chairman of a national committee. See **Stf/C.**

**state abbreviations** Follow AP style for state abbreviations, except when including state in name of squadron in Last Horizon where you should use postal code. See **squadrons**.

**Stf/C** Abbreviation for staff commander. Use as a title only.

**sustaining member** One who has paid a lump sum in lieu of yearly national dues. Not a rank. Don't capitalize.

## T

**TEAM** "Together Everyone Accomplishes/Achieves More." PR slogan. No periods.

**time** USPS style dictates that military time always must be used. Therefore, 1 a.m. is 0100, 1 p.m. is 1300, 4:30 p.m. is 1630, etc. The word "hours" does not follow the time; do not use a colo to separate the hour and minutes.

**titles** See ranks.

**toll-free** Always hyphenate. The USPS toll-free number is 888-367-8777. (888 FOR USPS may be used in marketing copy).

**trademarks** It is preferable to use a generic term. However, if a registered trademark is used, follow it with the generic noun: *Kleenex tissue*. There is no need to place the symbol after USPS every time it is mentioned in the magazine. It is on the banner.

**Treasurer's Department** Note apostrophe.

**25-year member** Not a title, don't capitalize. Use number and hyphen.

## U

**URLs** In general, we italicize URLs in the magazine. You usually don't need to publish the prefix and www for URLs beginning with "http://www." unless the address won't work without it. When in doubt, test it out. However, include full prefix information for "https://" or "ftp://" URLs. The USPS website is *usps.org*. In general, main.html or index.html designations can be omitted from published addresses as they are the recognized defaults. Shorten long addresses for publication in the magazine using a web address shortener, such as [goo.gl](http://goo.gl) or [tinyurl.com](http://tinyurl.com), [tiny.cc](http://tiny.cc) or [bitly.com](http://bitly.com). Always include direct, complete hyperlinks in digital formats. For SEO purposes, avoid "click here" in online hyperlink copy. Instead use a descriptive term, such as "USPS headquarters staff."

**United States Power Squadrons** Always put the "s" on the end.

**U.S.**, Follow AP style, acceptable for *adj.* and *n.* In headlines, use US (no periods)

**USBI** United Safe Boating Institute. Spell out on first reference.

**USCG** U.S. Coast Guard. Spell out on first reference.

**USCGAux** U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Spell out on first reference.

**USPS** United States Power Squadrons. Acceptable on second reference.

**USPS guides** Self-study guides available to USPS members and the public from the Ship's Store. The guides are Basic Plotting Guide; Boat Insurance; Compass Adjusting; The Boatowner's Guide to GMDSS and Marine Radio; How to Fly Flags; Knots, Bends and Hitches for Mariners; Knot Tying: The Basic Knots CD; Marine Amateur Radio; Navigational Astronomy; Plotting and Labeling Standards; Predicted Log Guide; Introduction to Sailing; Sight Reduction Methods; USPS Nautical Glossary; and Water Sports

**USPS Bylaws** For official document available at [http://www.usps.org/national/hq/documents/USPS\\_Bylaws.pdf](http://www.usps.org/national/hq/documents/USPS_Bylaws.pdf).

## V

**V/C** Vice commander. Use V/C as title only, not a noun. There are five vice commanders: the national educational officer, national administrative officer, national secretary, national executive officer and national treasurer.

Capitalize official title when used before a name: *National Administrative Officer Joe Doe*.

**VHF** Acceptable on all references. Very high frequency.

**vice commander** See **V/C**

## W

**water ski** *n.* The ski itself

**water-skier** *n.* The person skiing

**water-ski, water-skiing, water-skied** *v.*

**Web** Acceptable on all references to World Wide Web. Capitalize.

**webmaster**

**website**

**Women's Certificate** Capitalize. These certificates are no longer offered as a type of USPS membership. Women were first admitted to the organization as regular members with full privileges in 1982. However, many women who were part of the organization before that time chose to maintain Women's Certificate status. Some women took advantage of full membership and retain their Women's Certificates as well.

**X, Y, Z**