
Adding Parties

When adding new parties to the ECF database, 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 the ECF System 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.

Searching For Parties

Make sure you search the ECF database for every party you want to add 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 "United States" can cause ambiguity if everyone is entering it differently. For instance, following the rules in this Style Guide can help avoid "United States" being in the data base in multiple ways such as "UNITED STATES", "U.S.", "US", "USA", "U.S.A.", or "U.S. of A".

Search Strategies

ECF searches are key word searches and no longer 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, 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, 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. Don't give up to quickly, try variations of the name.
 - 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

Bottom line: **DO NOT USE AN ASTERISK IN SEARCH CRITERIA.**

- Finally, 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 Debtor(s)

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

If a debtor has a title, add the title in the "party text" box. Do not use the Title field.

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

- The name of the debtor without the title will appear in docket text.
- Titles will not appear on notices.
- 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

Bay State Granite, a Massachusetts Corporation

Catherine O'Malley, 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.

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.

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

You MUST add an address for the defendant.

Do NOT add a title for plaintiffs or defendants.

Make sure to select the plaintiff or defendant party role.

Adding Creditors

Add creditors to cases using names already in the ECF data base if at all possible.

When you search for a creditor, it is very likely that you will find the party in the ECF data base. For example, Creditors (*such as Ford Motor Credit*) are added to many different cases. Ideally, there should be only one Ford Motor Credit party in the ECF data base which would greatly simplify 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.

Verify that the address is correct, if not delete the address fields before accepting the Party Information screen.

Make sure to select the creditor party role.

Style Conventions for Names

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

Capitalization

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

Punctuation

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) or "n" or "n/a" for no or none.

Multiple Names

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” even if it is part of a company name on the petition or pleading. In ECF, the & will not work at this time with software from the Bankruptcy Noticing Center.

B. and 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	1st 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 ECF application.

Address 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 26th Street
425 6th Street
1 Valley Plaza

At case opening, you must use the debtors street address. For a creditor, you may use the P.O. Box.

John J. Johnson
4218 Elmwood Lane
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 information.

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

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

Use the full digit zip code if at all possible.

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
Milton, MA 02186

Use c/o to indicate “In Care Of”.

Manuel Ortega, Jr.
c/o Manuel Ortega, Sr.
6612 East 6th Street
El Paso, TX 79901

The preferred format for telephone numbers is (617) 555-3851.

Creditor Matrix Specification

Names and addresses must be aligned left (*flush against the left margin, no leading blanks.*)

- Do not include page numbers, headers, footers, etc.
- The information must be on five lines or less per creditor.
- Each line may contain no more than 40 characters.
- The creditor's name must be on the first line. Put the first name first, any middle initial then the last name.
- Use the second line for c/o (care of) or Attention: information.
- If you have a physical address and post office box information, list the P.O. Box information not the physical address.
- City and state abbreviation and ZIP code must be on the last line. (*If the address only needs to use four lines the city and state are on the fourth line.*)
- All states must be the standard two-letter abbreviations.
- Any nine-digit ZIP codes used must contain a hyphen separating the two groups of digits.
- Each creditor's name and address must be separated by at least one blank line.
- **DO NOT USE SPECIAL CHARACTERS SUCH AS %, (), [], or &.** These characters will interfere with software used by the Bankruptcy Noticing Center.
- **DO NOT INCLUDE ACCOUNT NUMBERS.**
- Lists of amended creditors must only contain the *added creditors*. Since amended creditors are filed with the motion as a PDF document, lists of more than 50 added creditors must be submitted on disk clearly identifying the case name and number for the Clerk's office.
- Do not include the names and address(es) of the debtor, debtor's counsel or the U.S. Trustee on the matrix as the ECF program will add them automatically.

Style Conventions for 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 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	Bld.
Highway	Hwy.
Interstate Highway	I.H.
Lane	Ln.
Street	St.
Road	Rd.

Style Conventions for Docket Text

The ECF application has been designed to produce a consistent form of docket text. Most of the time you will not need to change docket text in any way when you are creating docket entries.

Modifying or Enhancing Docket text:

- Descriptions should be simple but sufficiently adequate so that the reader is able to decide whether or not they should open the document. (*e.g., exhibits*)
- Language should be precise. Property should be identified so the reader know what property is affected. (*e.g., Relief from Stay*)
- Use the pretext boxes. Do not add amendment language to the Text box.
- Check your spelling.
- Contact the Case Administrator or Help desk with your questions.

United States Bankruptcy Court
District of Massachusetts ECF
Style Guide

This guide contains the preferred style practices for all users of the Electronic Case Filing System in the District of Massachusetts. The intention of the guide is to make everyone's task easier, whether they are entering data or inquiring into the 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 ECF application.

Acknowledgments

This Guide was the work of many talented people from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Texas. We recognize their hard work and thank them for generously sharing their materials and assisting us to successfully implement ECF in the District of Massachusetts.