

CM/ECF Format for Adding Parties

**A Guide on Properly Adding Parties to CM/ECF
for Attorneys and Law Firm Staff**



United States District Court, Southern District of Florida

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I. Introduction

This guide contains the preferred style practices for all users of the CM/ECF application in the Southern District of Florida to properly enter party names. The intention of the guide is to make everyone's task easier, whether they are entering data or inquiring into the CM/ECF database, thus displaying information in more uniform and predictable ways, as well as reducing confusion and errors.

II. Searching for Parties before Adding

A) Searching for Parties

Before adding any party to a case, search for that party using appropriate "search clues, listed in this guide. If the system finds the correct name, select it to help eliminate different versions or duplicates of the same party name; be sure to scroll down through the list of names.

Note: If you find something similar, check your own spelling or configuration to determine which is preferable. 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."

B) Searching Strategies and Tips

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

- The search is not case sensitive, but party names should be entered with initial caps and lower case letters.
- When searching for parties, the more search clues you provide, the more likely you are to find the exact person for whom you are searching.
- Use an asterisk (*) if unsure about spelling. For example, when entering Clyde, you might type Cl*de, leaving open the possibility that the correct spelling is Clide.
- Using the * for government entities and agencies or parties with larger corporate identities will help you locate them. For example, enter US Dep* for US

Department of Justice, you will retrieve US Dept of Justice and US Department of Justice.

- When searching, if just the last name is entered, CM/ECF may return a list of a hundred parties with that last name. However, if you know the first name or initial, you can add that to the first name field to narrow your search. For example, instead of entering Grant only, if you search for Carol Grant, you will retrieve Carol A. Grant and Carolyn Grant.
- When searching for parties, it may be necessary to conduct multiple searches. First, search for the entire party's name (i.e., World Communications). If that is not successful, you can search for part of the party's name (i.e. 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 Daily Times may not produce a result. But a search request for Daily Times will be successful. Likewise a search for Daily Times may not produce a result; but a search for The Daily Times will be successful.
- When searching for a party **DO NOT** use an asterisk or star at the beginning of the word. But an asterisk or star may be used before or within search strings. For example, Villa*; Agricult*re Dep*, Dep*t of Justice.
- An unsuccessful search for A & A Metals might be successful if you search without spaces i.e. A&A Metals. On the other hand, an unsuccessful search for A&A Metals might be successful if you search with spaces i.e. A & A Metals.
- Search by last name "Doe", if you have parties referenced as "Jane Doe, John Doe, Doe, or Does".
- When searching for a party being sued in their official capacity, search by their official title, as opposed to their individual name. (i.e. US Attorney General, instead of Eric H. Holder, Jr.)

III. Adding Parties in CM/ECF

A) Basics

Much of case opening and the docketing of initiating documents, in CM/ECF consist of adding the names of plaintiffs and defendants to cases. When adding new parties to the CM/ECF database, the names should conform to standard punctuation and spacing conventions listed in this guide.

B) Proper Format and Style Conventions For Names

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

- **Add** plaintiffs and defendants to cases using **names exactly as they appear on the complaint or notice of removal** and **in the order** in which they are listed.
- **If the name appears on the list** in the database, **select it** to help eliminate different versions or duplicates of the same party name.
- Use **upper and lower case** characters for all names and capitalize the first letter in a proper noun. (i.e. Wallace D. Smith, United Insurance Services)
- Use **single spacing** between all names and initials and punctuation if appropriate. (i.e. J. J. Jones, Smith, Inc., CW Bradford Ltd.)
- When typing names that have upper and lower case letters or hyphens, **do not insert spaces**. (i.e. 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 John Michael Kramer Smith, add the extra names in the Middle Name box.

Last name: Martin

Middle name: Michael Kramer

First name: John

- **Business names** should be **entered entirely in the Last Name field**. Do not use the First Name or Middle Name field 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. (i.e. B & D Company, Cameron & Associates)
- Enter **US and USA without any spaces**. (i.e. USDA ; US Department of Agriculture, US Attorney)

C) Party Information Screen

It is not necessary to complete all the fields listed on the party information screen. See details as follows.

D) Generation

Enter the generation information (i.e. Jr., Sr., III, IV, etc.) in the generation field.

E) Title

If a party has a title, add the title (i.e. Nurse Practitioner, Lead Foreman, Official Administrator, Warden, Correctional Officer, etc.) 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.

The information entered in the title field (i.e. Dr., Rev., etc.), will only appear in docket sheet, but **not in the docket text**.

F) Role

Select the appropriate party role (i.e. plaintiff or defendant).

The role will **default to defendant**; change the role, as necessary.

G) Address Fields

Do not add the address information for the party. Ensure the address fields are blank, and delete the fields, if needed, before accepting the party information screen.

Do not add the phone/fax information for the party. Ensure the phone/fax fields are blank, and delete the fields, if needed, before accepting the party information screen.

IV. ENTERING SPECIAL NAMES

A) Spanish Surnames

The father’s surname, or in the case of a married woman, the husband’s surname, is always used as the control name.

Example: *Jose Rodolfo Ramirez-Villareal*

Last name: Ramirez-Villareal

First name: Jose

Middle name: Rodolfo

B) Spanish Female Names

The “de” in lower-case letters indicates that the woman is married. (i.e. Lucero Villegas de Ramirez) Consequently, the control name is her husband’s surname, “Ramirez”.

NOTE: There are some exceptions when the “de” is used to link two first names

Example: *Lucero Villegas de Ramirez*

Last name: Ramirez-Villegas de

First name: Lucero

Spanish speaking countries use the “de”, “la”, “los”, “del” to link two first names to make it into one name, e.g., Maria **de** Jesus, Maria **de** Asencion, Maria **de la** Luz, Maria **de los** Angeles, Maria **del** Rosario, Maria **de** Atoche. All the names linked with the **de**, **la**, **los**, **del**, mentioned above form one first name.

Example: *Maria del Rosario Fernandez*

Last name: Fernandez

First name: Maria del Rosario

C) First and Middle Names

Enter the full first, middle and last name in these fields.

Example: *Mary Jane Smith*

Last: Smith

First: Mary

Middle: Jane

An initial with a period can be entered in either of those fields, if the full name is unknown.

Example: *M. J. Smith*

Last: Smith

First: M.

Middle: J.

Always leave these fields **blank** for **Companies**, **Organizations**, etc. Use the Last Name field to enter the business name.

D) Individuals Sued in Official Capacity

When adding a **party being sued in their official capacity**, enter the **job title** in the **Last Name** field, and leave the First and Middle Name fields blank. The individual’s name should then be typed in the Party Text screen. This is done because it is not the individual who is being sued, but the official title they hold is.

Example: *Lieutenant Smith*
Last: Smith
Title: Lieutenant

Example: *Lieutenant George Smith*
Last: Smith
First: George
Title: Lieutenant

Example: *Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services*
Last: Secretary of Health and Human Services
Party Text: Donna Shalala

See *GOVERNMENT AGENCIES* section for additional examples.

E) Business Names

Enter the full first, middle and last name in these fields. When entering a **Business Name**, avoid using abbreviations for the first word, unless an abbreviation is necessary to properly identify the business within the space allowed (i.e., Int'l Credit Bank, Nat'l Bankers Union, etc.).

When possible, an agency/business name should be entered in the **Last Name** field precisely as it appears on the complaint, including punctuation if it fits, up to 20 characters.

Example: *Wood Bros. Manufacturing Corp.*
Last Name: Wood Bros. Manufacturing Corp.

F) Real Estate Names

When entering **Real Estate** as a party, use the street address or the most descriptive part first. **DO NOT** use **First Name** or **Middle Name** when entering real estate as a party.

Example: *One Parcel of Real Estate located at 23 Elm Street, Miami, FL*
Last Name: One Parcel of Real Estate located at 23 Elm Street, Miami FL

Example: *A Single Family Residence located at 123 Main Street, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33021, Parcel Control Number 12-34-56-78-90-000-123 including the appurtenances thereto and the improvements thereon*
Last Name: 123 Main Street, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33021
Party Text: A Single Family Residence Parcel Control Number 12-34-56-78-90-000-123 including the appurtenances thereto and the improvements thereon.

G) Money Amount Names

When entering an **Amount of Money** as a party, enter the dollar amount in the **Last Name** field. **DO NOT** use **First Name** or **Middle Name** when entering an amount of money as a party.

Example: *Fourteen Thousand Six Hundred Sixty-Nine Dollars (\$14,669.00) in U.S. Currency*

Last Name: \$14,669.00 in U.S. Currency

H) Proceeds Names

When entering a **Proceed Amount** as a party, enter the account number in the **Last Name** field. **DO NOT** use **First Name** or **Middle Name** when entering accounts as a party.

Example: *Proceeds of Health Care Fraud Transferred to Certain Domestic Bank Accounts and Accrued Interest in Wachovia Bank Account Number 123456789*

Last Name: 123456789

Party Text: Proceeds of Health Care Fraud Transferred to Certain Domestic Bank Accounts and Accrued Interest in Wachovia Bank Account Number

I) Contents Names

When entering **Contents or Valuables** as a party, enter the container number information in the **Last Name** field. **DO NOT** use **First Name** or **Middle Name** when entering contents or valuables of containers as a party.

Example: *The Contents of One Container #123456 including 1000 Sony Portable DVD Players, 220 GE Cash Registers and 5000 Sharp Printing Calculators*

Last Name: Contents of Container #123456

Party Text: including 1000 Sony Portable DVD Players, 220 GE Cash Registers and 5000 Sharp Printing Calculators

J) Vehicle Names

When entering the **Name of a Vehicle** as a party, enter the name of the vehicle as shown below.

DO NOT use **First Name** or **Middle Name** when entering vessel as a party.

Example: *One 2010 Land Rover Vin. # ABCDE123456*

Last Name: 2010 Land Rover

Party Text: Vin. # ABCDE123456

K) Vessel Names

When entering the **Name of a Vessel** as a party, enter the name of the vessel as shown below.

DO NOT use **First Name** or **Middle Name** when entering vessel as a party.

Example: *M/V "Little Boat"*

Last Name: M/V Little Boat (**without the quotation marks**)

Party Text: its engines, tackle, and appurtenances, in rem

Example: *One 25' Vessel Registered as FL 2102 GE, its inventory and trailer*

Last Name: One 25' Vessel Registered as FL 2102 GE

Party Text: its inventory and trailer

L) Radio Station Transmission Equipment Names

When entering the **Radio Station Transmission Equipment** as a party, enter the frequency being transmitted from in the Last Name field as show below. **DO NOT** use **First Name** or **Middle Name** when entering defendant property as a party.

Example: *Any and all radio station transmission equipment, radio frequency power amplifiers, radio frequency test equipment and any other equipment associated with or used in connection with transmissions on frequency 88.3 MHz, located at 3058 West Broward Boulevard, Florida 33312*

Last Name: 88.3 MHz

Party Text: Any and all radio station transmission equipment, radio frequency power amplifiers, radio frequency test equipment and any other equipment associated with or used in connection with transmissions on frequency located at 3058 West Broward Boulevard, Florida 33312

M) Estate of Deceased Individuals

When entering the **Estate of a Deceased Individual** as a party, enter the name of the owner of the estate in the same way that the name of an individual is entered, then type the descriptive information in the **Party Text**. This will make it easier to find when doing a name search.

Example: *Estate of John A. Goldsmith, deceased*

Last Name: Goldsmith

First Name: John

Middle: A.

Party Text: Estate of deceased

N) Government Agencies

When entering the **Government Agencies** as a party, **enter the US and USA acronyms without any spaces.**

Example: *United States of America or USA*
Last Name: United States of America

Example: *US Department of Agriculture, US Dept. of Agriculture, or USDA*
Last Name: US Department of Agriculture

Example: *Michael Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security Administration*
Last Name: Commissioner of Social Security Administration
Party Text: Michael Astrue

Example: *US Attorney General, Eric H. Holder, Jr.*
Last Name: US Attorney General
Party Text: Eric H. Holder, Jr.

O) Alias Information

The alias information should be added using the add alias icon, on the left pane participant tree of your screen. Here you can enter as many aliases for the party as needed, one at a time. The party name is also shown; so that you can see which party you are entering an alias for. Do not add the alias information under the party name or party text fields.