

Your NCO Journal

The NCO Journal is a professional publication for Noncommissioned Officers of the U.S. Army. The magazine is published monthly and distributed in printed form to an audience of more than 450,000 readers worldwide and is available online. **The NCO Journal** mission is to provide a forum for the open exchange of ideas and information, to support training, education and development of the NCO Corps and to foster a closer bond among its members. To accomplish this mission we provide timely and factual information on topics about the Army and the NCO Corps to the Army's NCOs. Our audience includes active, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers, sister and international services, retirees, civilian employees and family members.

We focus on Army noncommissioned officers, what they are doing around the world to lead Soldiers; new equipment; safety; and on new policies, procedures, techniques, trends and activities within the Army. We do not publish feature articles on individuals or units, nor do we publish poems, first-person accounts, awards notices, essays, cartoons or professional dissertations.

Below is a list of most frequently asked questions and the answers. We hope this clarifies things.

1. Q: How do I subscribe to the *NCO Journal*?

A: **Individual** subscriptions to the NCO Journal are available through the Government Printing Office at an annual cost of \$16 for domestic and Army Post Office (APO) addresses or \$22.40 for delivery to foreign addresses. The subscription price covers four issues annually. The subscription program is open to all individuals and non-government organizations. Individual copies will also be available for \$5 domestic and \$7 foreign. To order online, visit the GPO Bookstore at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov> and type in "**NCO Journal**" at the search field. After the search completes, click on the shopping cart next to the title and follow the instructions provided. You may also subscribe by calling the GPO at 1-866-512-1800.

Any **unit** with a publications account can update their 12 Series to request the NCO Journal using the same procedure they use to request all other publications. They can update their 12 series at the <http://www.apd.army.mil> Web site. The IDN for **The NCO Journal** is 050041.

2. Q: What are the guidelines for submitting articles to the *NCO Journal*?

A: There are many, but the most important one is that the story must focus on an NCO leadership/professional development issue. Think in terms of *Popular Mechanics* articles: Self Help Guide to professional development; i.e. Training, Warrior Tasks, NCOES, Leadership techniques, Lessons Learned, Counseling – things that a young NCO can use to better prepare himself or herself to lead Soldiers in the field. A story about winning a marathon race may be good for your local post newspaper, but it doesn't translate well to the rest of the Army. Think of relevance to the entire NCO Corps (or at least most of it) before you decide to

send a story to **The NCO Journal**. Here's one statistic you need to keep in mind: 71.9 percent of all NCOs fall in the ranks of sergeant and staff sergeant. They are **our** target audience.

3. Q. Okay, so with that in mind, what is **The NCO Journal** looking for?

A: **The NCO Journal** is looking for stories that the entire Army can benefit from. All stories and photos should be sent to our email address: ATSS-SCN@conus.army.mil. To help facilitate your ideas and story submissions **The NCO Journal** is broken down into sections which give the magazine focus:

News 2 Use – This is our news brief section of the magazine. Here we give our readers small snippets of news on changing technologies, personnel issues, recruiting initiatives, healthcare news, and upcoming Army-wide events. We dedicate four pages to this section and usually get anywhere from eight to 16 short news stories on those pages. A good guideline to use would be anything that has happened or is going to happen that will affect the majority of the NCO Corps. News brief submissions should be no longer than two pages, double spaced type at 12 point Times New Roman. Photos, while not required, may be submitted in digital format (300 dpi jpeg) and should be at least a 4x6 inch format. Our server will not accept any files larger than 3MB.

Leadership – Here we are looking for stories not necessarily about individual leaders, but about leadership itself – information leaders need to know to make educated decisions that affect the mission, morale and/or safety of Soldiers in general. A good example of this is the recent story on Motorcycle accidents/fatalities, what the Army is doing to help reduce the negative trend and how one unit's leadership found a way to go from having the highest accident rate in their specialized organization to having the lowest. Another leadership story we recently ran focused on the importance of establishing family care plans, while another looked at leadership challenges as seen by three retired sergeants major of the Army. Basically as retired Sergeant Major of the Army Richard A. Kidd said, "Leadership challenges are primarily to lead, train and care for the troops."

Training – The Army is constantly training, that's why we are the best in the world. But how we train is not always the same at every post or every unit. If there is a new way to "skin the cat" and get the same or better end results – a highly-trained, confident Soldier – we want to know about it. Training topics that have recently run in **The NCO Journal** include: Killer Traffic – vehicle borne IEDs, Convoy Operations – Movement to Contact, changes at WLC, and more. The story ideas are endless as long as they include training as the main objective.

On Point – Here is where we kind of get "featurish." Recent stories we have published that fall into this category are: Women – The Changing Face of Terrorism; Continue the Mission – the story of amputees and severely injured

Soldiers being rehabilitated and retained in the Army; the challenges of being a dual-military married couple; Propaganda and its use; and tracing the history of the noncommissioned officer. Each of these stories had relevance to the entire Army, written in a feature style. All of our stories are written in a more conversational way, but the On Point stories really emphasize this style the most.

From the Field – This is the section where we use many of the stories you submit. Some stories we run as is. Others we edit for security, accuracy, policy and propriety. A good example of this is the story that came from a Soldier in Iraq outlining the actions of the 617th MP Company that stuck to the basics to defeat 34 insurgents who had attacked a convoy in their area of operational responsibility (AOR). As the lead stated, “Leadership, training and discipline were the backbone of a mid-March firefight victory.” Another recent article from the field was written by retired Sergeant Major of the Army Julius Gates who challenged why leaders continue to call, and allow others to call, Soldiers grunts, Joes, Snuffy or G.I.s instead of showing proper respect by calling them what they are – Soldiers.

Photo Journal – This is a section that sadly is not getting used much by budding photojournalists. The guidelines for submitting pictures are as follows: the picture should depict NCOs in action, whether it’s leading Soldiers in the field, conducting training or just plain taking care of business. You don’t have to be a professional photographer to enter. When submitting photos please include the name(s) and rank of person(s) in the photo, a brief description of the action to include location, and, of course, your name and unit. Photos may be submitted in either hard copy or digitally. If you plan on emailing a digital photo, make sure it is at least 300 dpi and in JPEG format. Our server cannot accept any files larger than 3MB. Also please ensure your photos are at least 4x6 in. so that resizing will not cause any distortions in quality. Mail photos to: The NCO Journal, Commandant, USASMA, ATTN: ATSS-SCN, Editor, 11291 SGT E Churchill St., Fort Bliss, TX 79918-8002 or email the electronic version to: ATSS-SCN@conus.army.mil.

Alibis – Here is where we publish your Letters to the Editor. We want to hear from you about stories that have run in **The NCO Journal**, your thoughts on Army issues or whatever it is you think others in the Army need to know about – promotion, NCOES, medals and awards, or more. We do reserve the right to edit your letters for content, grammar, length, security, accuracy, policy and propriety. Please be professional.

4. Q: Now that I have this information, how do I get published?

A: Start by reading **The NCO Journal** first. Not everyone can just pick up a pen and start writing a story a format we can use them in. **The NCO Journal** is written in a conversational, active voice style. It is not your typical dry who, what, when and where news story magazine. We try to tell informative and educational stories

in a user-friendly style that helps to keep the reader’s attention. By reading back issues of **The NCO Journal**, you should be able to get a feel for the “flavor” of our approach and what topics resonate best. If you don’t have copies of the magazine available at your unit, go to our Web site at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/default.asp> and read through the last four to six back issues. Once you get a better feel for type of stories that we publish in **The NCO Journal**, you should be able to find a story idea that is relevant to the entire NCO Corps.

5. Q: How long can the story be?

A: The chart below should give you an idea of what to base your story on. We must caution, however, that we reserve the right to edit for length, grammar and content, security, accuracy, policy and propriety.

Story Length

The text you send to **The NCO Journal** should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-point Times New Roman. The tables below will help you estimate the length of the stories we can publish

Average Line Lengths of Departments & Features

Element	Words	Lines	Pages (Dbl-Sp., 1-in. margin, 12 pt. Times New Roman)
News U Can Use	100-300	13-50	1-2
Letters	100-200	26-60	1-2
Leadership	300-1,200	15-50	1-2
Training	300-1,200	13-50	1-2
On Point	300-1,200	40-160	2-6
Alibis (Letters)	100-300	13-50	1-2

6. Q: Why does **The NCO Journal** want my stories?

A: You are the subject matter experts in your lanes. **The NCO Journal** can't cover every issue in the Army. We are but a small staff, that's why we need you. You are the ones who have the "boots on the ground," up-front and personal look at what's happening in today's Army. You are our sensors. You're closer to the story, more familiar with the facts and can provide a perspective that are unable to.

7. Q: Okay I've got a story idea, what now?

A: Call us or email us. Once you've decided on a story concept, call us at (915) 568-8550/9069 or (DSN) 978. We would be glad to discuss your story idea with you to determine if it fits **The NCO Journal's** needs. We would rather run a story written by a subject matter expert. You can also email us at ATSS-SCN@conus.army.mil. Once you have your writing mission you are ready to get started. Here are some tips that will help you:

Interviews and Research – Now that you have a story concept, write a story outline. In determining how you want your story to come together, think about your main and supporting facts, and the resources you have to explain, substantiate and demonstrate your story's central point. You'll probably need to conduct initial research about your subject. Maybe you'll need to review the field manual on the subject or review earlier periodicals and newspapers. You may need to interview individuals for background purposes, or as central resources in the story.

Writing and Shooting Straight – Now you're ready to write! Focus on the "lead" to reach out and grab the reader's attention! Think of yourself as the reader. Ask yourself what would capture your attention and make you want to read the article.

Writing Tips:

- Write with a conversational tone but not too folksy. Keep most sentences under 25 words. Paragraphs shouldn't be more than two or three sentences. Tell the story using active verbs.
- Keep it simple, direct and easy to understand. Avoid "two-dollar" words when simple ones will do. Spell out acronyms and unit designations on first use.
- Use quotes to emphasize something a person said. But be careful not to write the article using one quote after another.
- For capitalization, abbreviation and word usage, refer to the Associated Press Stylebook and **The NCO Journal** Style Guide.
- Clear it! **The NCO Journal** is an official publication and AR 360-5 requires articles be cleared through your command and S-2 or G-2. If you have questions about clearances, contact your PAO.

Photography Tips:

The NCO Journal uses photos liberally. While most topics lend themselves to color, black and white photos can also be very dramatic. All photos become the property of **The NCO Journal** unless you request their return in your cover letter.

- Avoid boring, static, posed or "grip-and-grin" photos. Photograph people and/or equipment doing something.
- Focus on people. **The NCO Journal** is a "people" magazine, and the best shots feature people in action.
- Frame your shots. Focus on your subject, but be aware of "clutter" in the background. Vary your angles and shoot a variety of horizontal and vertical, long, medium, close-up and extremely close-up shots.
- Use flash to highlight shadows; outdoors on a sunny day, BDU caps and Kevlar helmets will shade a person's eyes. Indoors, use bounced flash rather than direct flash to soften shadows when possible.
- Technical quality often determines whether a photo is accepted. Don't shoot at less than 1/60 of a second unless you have a tripod or some other way to prevent camera motion. **The NCO Journal** cannot use blurry or out-of-focus photos.
- Provide complete caption information: names and ranks of everyone who can be identified in the picture, their unit, location and a brief description of the action.
- Attach the captions to the photos, or number everything so captions and photos can be matched.
- Digital images must meet or exceed the technical specifications spelled out under "Procedures for Sending Digital Images."
- If you're not good with a camera, ask your public affairs office or TSAC Photo Lab for help. Perhaps they can provide advice or a photographer.

8. Q: When should I send stories to **The NCO Journal**?

A: Each issue of **The NCO Journal** is planned months in advance, so submit your article as soon as possible if it's based on an exercise or event. We would not want to reject your story just because it would be out-of-date before we could publish it. Ideally, e-mail your story or send it on a compact disk as a Microsoft Word or ASCII file. If you can't do that, mail your best-quality printout or typewritten manuscript. As a general rule, don't fax your story or mail it separately from your photos.

A professional submission includes: Provide a cover letter with the author's name (and rank, if the author is military), unit, duty station and geographic location, complete mailing address, a daytime telephone number, a short synopsis of the story and a biographical sketch of the author.

One double-spaced manuscript per envelope, plus text in electronic form or an explanation of how the electronic text will be provided.

The manuscript should be easy to read and free of misspellings, grammatical errors and punctuation errors. Use your spell checker!

Photos to illustrate your story (prints or digital images). Digital images must be sent in a usable size and format (as defined under "Procedures for Sending Digital Images.")

Captions affixed to photos. For digital images, ensure that captions are included in the data file, or are provided on printouts of each image.

9. Q: What happens to my submission?

A: The editorial staff reviews and which determines whether the story is acceptable. **The NCO Journal** normally notifies contributors within a month after receiving the submission to let you know if your story was accepted or rejected. If rejected, we'll explain why.

10. Q: What are the most frequent reasons for story rejections?

A: Here are the main reasons:

- Shotgun releases. Shotgun releases are those sent to a large number of recipients without regard to form, content or timing. Shotgun releases generally have two major problems: they typically are announcements of events upcoming within a few days or weeks, and their scope of interest doesn't go beyond the area of the releasing post.
- You waited too long to submit. If we receive your story in June, the earliest it could run would be in the October issue (which is printed in September), making a March story seven months old.
- You didn't know our style. **The NCO Journal** doesn't accept the following:
 - Stories written in the first person.
 - Poetry or fiction.
 - Obituaries.
 - Cartoons.
 - Information papers or after-action reports.
 - Decorations, except those for valor.
 - Sports stories below the all-Army level.
 - Stories with no NCO/Army angle.
 - Term and research papers or dissertations.
 - It needed too much work. While we almost never print a story without some editing, those that require a major rewrite to fit our magazine style are often rejected.

The NCO Journal is your magazine, and we want you to help us keep the NCO Corps informed on professional development issues.

Writing and Shooting for *The NCO Journal*

Your Best Bet for Publication

The best formula for publication in *The NCO Journal* has three steps:

Read the magazine and study contributed articles.

Provide quality photographic support.

Quality, action photos increase your chances of publication.

Limit the amount of text you provide.

Tightly written stories with a single good photo are excellent candidates for one of our departments. Most of our features are only slightly longer than department stories, but they are distinguished by their subject matter or the quality of their photo.

Our average news item is 100 to 300 words, with photo support. Full-length stories contain 300 to 1,200 words. All photos must have complete captions.

The NCO Journal works on a three- to four-month cycle for in-depth news stories and a two-month cycle for news items. This gives you time to target your stories for specific months, but it also means that your stories must have a certain "shelf life" or be planned well in advance to meet appropriate deadlines.

Specifications for photographs:

If you're sending us digital images ensure the camera is set on the largest image size and the highest quality resolution settings that your camera will allow. The largest image size is usually "**Full**" or "**XGA**." The highest resolution settings are usually called "**High**," "**Super Fine**," or "**Ultra-High**." Cameras set at "Standard" or "Basic" quality produces images only good enough for Web sites.

Do not shoot a small photo on a low-resolution setting to save data storage space in your camera. Shooting small images at low resolution will allow you to take more photos per shooting, but we won't be able to publish any of them. Higher settings create larger photos and files and, generally, a higher quality product.

If your camera gives you the option, shoot the photo as a TIFF file. We also accept JPEG files. When saving a file as a JPEG, choose a quality setting of "**Maximum**" or "**12**" and the format option of "**Baseline (Standard)**."

Download the photo in raw data. When downloading a file from your camera or its removable storage card to another drive, save the image as raw data, or as it comes

off the camera. Do not manipulate the data. Do not resize or edit the image. Let our graphics department take care of that.

Do not manipulate or alter your photo in Photoshop or other programs. Please don't try to "beef up" an image shot at a low resolution. For example, shooting a 500-kilobyte image and enlarging the pixels per inch until the file size is 1.5 megabytes will not make the image clearer – it only makes the image larger (bigger dot patterns –not more of them).

The best way to get digital images to us is to save them on a CD and mail them to **The NCO Journal, 11291 SGT E Churchill Street, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002, Attn: Editor**. You can also get images to us via email at ATSS-SCN@conus.army.mil. Do **NOT** send large image attachments (over 3MB) via email. Our server will reject them. If you have several photos to send it is best to send them on multiple emails or by mail on a CD rom.

For more information, contact Dave Crozier at (915) 744-1046 (DSN 798), or e-mail david.b.crozier@us.army.mil

The NCO Journal Style Guide

The NCO Journal follows **The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual** as its general guide. We recommend it for regular reference. Exceptions to that work, as well as some Army-specific terminology not covered there, are presented in the following style guide.

active duty: Lowercase on all references. Hyphenate as an adjective (an active-duty Soldier), but not as a noun (he served on active duty).

activate, inactivate: Army units do not deactivate or reactivate; they inactivate or activate.

airborne: Uppercase only when used as part of an official unit designation (101st Airborne Division) or when used as part of a school name (the Airborne School). The abbreviation is Abn. To be used on second reference.

airborne infantry, parachute infantry: These designations have not been official for many years; do not use them.

Al Qaeda: Do not hyphenate or lower case the "A"

ampersand (&): Do not use in text unless part of a title.

armed forces: Capitalize only as a proper name (Armed Forces Day), not as a noun (the armed forces) or adjective (an armed-forces member).

Army regulation: Lowercase regulation when used alone, uppercase if followed by the number, and use as AR on second reference with number.

Army Reserve: Can stand alone on second reference in uppercase, either as a noun or adjective, as "Reserve." Lowercase only in the case of "reserve component." Reservist is always uppercased.

Bradley: M1/M2/M3; may be called Bradley fighting vehicle (do not uppercase fighting or vehicle).

casualty: If used to refer to simulated injuries inflicted during a training exercise, use in quotes on first reference. The same rule applies to "dead," "shot," "wounded," "destroyed," etc. If they didn't actually occur, they belong in quotes on first reference.

city names: Follow AP Style guide.

country names: On first reference, the name of every foreign city will be followed by the spelled-out name of the nation in which it is located (e.g., Worms, Germany).

cross-training: Hyphenate.

downlink (and uplink): When meant to describe the transmission of data to or from a satellite, use "transmit."

fort: It is always spelled out; never use "Ft." When listing a series of posts, use "Fort" before each applicable installation (e.g., Fort Belvoir, Va.; Fort Bragg, N.C.).

Global War on Terrorism: It is not the Global War on Terror. Terror is a state of mind, terrorism is an act.

headline capitalization: Uppercase the first word of a headline unless it is normally uppercased otherwise. (Proper nouns)

Marines, marine: Uppercase when referring to the branch of service (the Marine Corps, a Marine helicopter).

military equipment: Hyphenate all designations except those of American tracked armored vehicles (e.g., Russian T-72, M-16 and F-15, but M1A1 and M113).

military rank: Always refer to Soldiers by rank, not pay grade (e.g., sergeant or Sgt., not E-5).

military rank abbreviations: Follow AP style for all services.

National Guard: Can stand alone in uppercase as "Guard" on second reference. Use "National Guard members" instead of "Guardsmen" or "Guard Soldiers."

NCO: Can stand alone as an acronym.

on duty/off duty: Same usage as "active duty"; hyphenate only as adjectives (on-duty responsibilities; off-duty activities, but "He plays in a band when he's off duty;" "When she's on duty, she's totally focused.").

overwatch: This is a tactical term and should only be used in the tactical sense (e.g., "the M1A1s were in an overwatch position" is OK; "the personnel office has overwatch authority on transfers" is not).

PCS: Can stand alone as an acronym.

prior to: Use "before."

ranger: Uppercase only when used as part of an official unit designation (75th Ranger Regiment) or when used as part of a school name (the Ranger School).

reserve component: This is always singular, and refers to both the National Guard and Reserve. Lowercase as a noun (the reserve component). Lowercase and hyphenate as an adjective (a reserve-component soldier).

Reserves, Reservist(s): See "Army Reserve."

service member: Avoid use of this term whenever possible, using instead "military member," Soldier, Marine, etc.

slant marks [/]: "And" is preferable in all cases ("PX and commissary," instead of PX/commissary).

Soldier: Uppercase in all uses.

special forces: Uppercase only when part of an official unit designation (7th Special Forces Group; but "he is special forces qualified").

state abbreviations: Use AP style. State abbreviation is always followed by a comma (e.g., in Seattle, Wash., the...) except use a semicolon in a series.

titles (magazine): Italicize names of magazines and books. Identify magazine article titles using quotation marks.

titles (job): Uppercase a person's job title only if it immediately precedes the name.

traveling: Use only one "I" in "traveling."

unit abbreviations:

Platoon: Plt.

Company: Co.

Battery: Btry.

Troop: Do not abbreviate

Squadron: Sqdn.

Battalion: Bn.

Brigade: Bde.

Armored Cavalry Regiment: ACR

Regiment: Regt.

Task Force: TF (if followed by number or name. Hyphenate if used with a number; e.g., TF-111.)

Division: Div.

Command: Cmd.

Corps: Do not abbreviate

Army (as in Fifth Army): Do not abbreviate

other abbreviations:

Infantry: Inf.

Armored: Do not abbreviate

Cavalry: Cav.

Field Artillery: FA

Air Defense Artillery: ADA

Division Artillery: DIVARTY

Special Forces Group: SFG

Mountain (as in 10th Mountain Div.): Mtn.

unit designations: Use full unit designation on first reference (3rd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment). Shorten on subsequent references (3rd Bn., 2nd Inf. Regt.). Avoid "3rd of the 2nd" or "3-2" or "3/2." It is Co. A and Battery B, but A Troop. Do not use parenthetical designations [e.g., (Separate), (Mechanized), etc.]. They are not official.

unit designation punctuation: Set off each designation element with commas, whether element is spelled out or abbreviated (the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry, was...)

vehicles: Humvee, never HMWWV or Hummer.

verb tense: Use past tense ("Jones said," not "Jones says").