

Alphabetic Filing Rules

Second Edition

**ARMA International Standards Committee
Alphabetic Filing Rules Subcommittee**



**ARMA International
Prairie Village, Kansas**

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ISBN: 0-933887-58-2

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Acknowledgments

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Foreword

ARMA International has issued *Alphabetic Filing Rules* as a standard. This publication was developed by ARMA members and approved through the ARMA International Standards Advisory and Development Committee's operating procedures process. Based on the consensus reached by individuals providing comments on this publication, the ARMA Standards Advisory and Development Committee voted to approve this publication as an ARMA Standard in December, 1994.

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Alphabetic Filing Rules for Records and Information Management

1. Introduction and Scope

This edition of ARMA's *Alphabetic Filing Rules* is designed to be a working tool, not a textbook. The basic premise used is that filing is done for ease of retrieval. For this to happen, it is absolutely necessary that filing rules be standardized and documented for the use of all personnel who file or retrieve the documents. Documenting filing decisions will ensure the consistency which is necessary for easy retrieval. These rules are designed with space to check or annotate each rule used. This format allows the *Alphabetic Filing Rules* to also be the documentation source.

The approach taken in compiling this publication gives simplified standard rules to follow. These rules will be applied to all general alphabetic filing. There is a section of specific rules which is designed for filing needs which may be found in specialized businesses.

- The Simplified Filing Standard Rules (Section 2.1) set standards which ensure consistency in filing. These Simplified Filing Standard Rules are designed to be the first step toward automated filing and retrieval. Included are some major changes from accepted alphabetic filing rules which need to be considered. These changes affect the filing of some compound words, numbers which are not spelled out, abbreviations, acronyms, governmental designation, etc.
- The Specific Filing Guidelines (or *Common Filing Practices*) constitute a collection of the more common non-standard filing practices which have been developed by offices with large filing systems. In such systems, identical names can appear more than once, and therefore cause difficulties in accurate filing and retrieval. Since these situations often can not be adequately handled by strict adherence to the Simplified Filing Standard Rules, the Specific Filing Guidelines provide examples of commonly accepted deviations. To ensure proper documentation of the filing system, it is critical to note and cross-reference the Simplified Filing Standard Rules and Specific Filing Guidelines being used in the organization.

- The Automated Conversion Guidelines give points to consider during the planning stage preceding conversion of an alphabetic file to an automated system for sorting and/or retrieval.
- A bibliography and index are included. Use of these tools will lead to the information needed when making filing decisions.
- A glossary of terms is included and is consistent with the ARMA *Glossary of Records Management Terms*.

Different offices have different needs for information retrieval. Those offices that have large files of one type of record may want to use one of the rules in Specific Filing Guidelines sections. The choice, or present use, of a standard rule, a specific guideline, or another practice should be checked in the 's and Notes column and any deviation noted. There are also offices that have unique filing problems which may not be included. Document the solutions to these problems. Creativity in designing filing systems which aid in the retrieval of information is acceptable. It is imperative to have documentation available which will facilitate consistency in filing and retrieval.

These rules are written to be used. Use them well, and to assure consistency, place a check mark by, or annotate the rules which apply; listen for different ways requests are stated to help modify the system to improve retrieval; be creative. Enjoy participating in the information management profession.

Examples of √'s and Rules

3. Place names in business names will follow the *Simplified Filing Standard Rule* that each word/filing unit is treated as a separate filing unit.

As written	As Filed			
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Alabama Power and Light	Alabama	Power	and	Light
New Jersey Coliseum	New	Jersey	Colisium	
Se Valle Publications, Inc.	SeValle	Publications	Inc	
St. Louis Power Compnay	StLouis	Power	Company	

OK to use

4. **Compass Terms in Business Names**
 Each word/unit in a filing name containing compass terms is considered a separate filing unit. If the term includes more than one compass point, treat it as it is written. Establish cross-references as needed.

As written	As Filed			
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
North East Forms Co.	North	East	Forms	Co
North Eastern Microfilm	North	Eastern	Microfilm	
North-East Data Co	NorthEast	Data	Co	
Northeast Systems	Northeast	Systems		
Northeastern Equipment Co.	Northeastern	Equipment	Co	

Do not use.

See 7.10
 Page 25

1.1 General Guidelines

Alphabetic filing rules are written for one purpose: to make retrieval easy through consistency in filing.

Each organization may either accept the ARMA standard or establish its own alphabetic filing rules from a combination of the standard rules, specific guidelines, or the other indexing practices. The choice should be determined by the organization's particular record retrieval needs. The rules used must then be **documented** and **communicated** as standard procedures to all personnel responsible for filing and retrieving information and records.

ARMA has chosen to define the filing method as *unit by unit*. The definition of a unit is as follows:

*A **filing unit** may be a number, a letter, a word or any combination of these as stated in the simplified and specific sections.*

Refer to the individual rule being used to determine the correct interpretation of a filing unit.

*One or more filing units are a **filing segment**, i.e., the total name, subject or number which is being used for filing purposes.*

It is imperative that the users of the files be thoroughly instructed on the design of the system. Both filing personnel and others who may retrieve documents from the files should receive periodic refresher instruction on the system. This will ensure **consistency** in filing and retrieval of information.

Computers may be used to enhance filing and retrieval. When computer use is anticipated, alphabetic filing rules should be compatible with the sorting capabilities of the computer. This compatibility will ease the change to, and utilization of, new technologies. Many of the following rules are written with this mind.

Remember that **consistency** and **documentation** are the key elements in making alphabetic filing rules effective.