

RULES AND CONVENTIONS OF SERVICE WRITING

INTRODUCTION



- The basic rules and conventions used in SW to **aid the clear presentation of facts and discs.**
- Additional conventions are used in **corres, staff papers and Op writing.**

AIM

To enhance the knowledge of SOs on the rules and conventions of SW.

SEQUENCE

- Layout.
- Superscription.
- Text.
- Subscription.
- Conclusion.

LAYOUT

- Service docs consist of three parts:
- **Superscription** - Everything above the salutation.
 - **Text** - The facts, arguments or problems.
 - **Subscription** - Everything below the text.

SUPERSCRPTION

- Security cl.
- Precedence.
- Copy No.
- Total pages.
- Identifying ref.
- Address of sender.
- Addressees.
- Date.

RESTRICTED	
DMI/A/10 (1)	Directorate of Military Intelligence Army Headquarters Post Office Box 553 COLOMBO (2) Army Tel: 55252 (1) Civ Tel: 0112432682 (1) e-mail: army@int.com
The Commander (2) (3) 562 Brigade Army Camp KANDY	19 January 2014
Sir (4)	
<u>REPORTING FOR DUTY</u> (5)	
1. I have the honour to inform that (4) I have received a posting order instructing me to report for duty as the Intelligence Officer, Headquarters 562 Brigade on 15 February 2014.	
2.	
Yours obediently (4)	
<i>HL Wijesekara</i> HL WIJESEKARA RSP MI (1) Captain	
RESTRICTED	



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Address of Sender	
Identifying Reference	COLOMBO
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e-mail Address	
Addressee (or See Distribution)	
SRI LANKA	Date
Salutation (if required)	
SUBJECT HEADING	
Reference(s):	
A	
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MAIN HEADING	
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ii.	
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Conventional ending (if required)	
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(Rank)	
(Appointment)	
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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

- Security cl shows the value of the asset.
- This value is determined by the degree of damage that could occur.
- The scope of protection includes the prevention of unauth disclosure.



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The four sy cls to be used are:

- Top Secret.
- Secret.
- Confidential.
- Restricted.



Ser	Sy Classification	Nature
1.	Top Secret	The unauth disclosure of info or material which would cause exceptionally grave damage to the Nation.
2.	Secret	The unauth disclosure of info or material which would cause serious injury to the interest of the Nation.
3.	Confidential	The unauth disclosure of info or material which would damage the interest of the Nation.
4.	Restricted	The unauth disclosure of info or material which would be undesirable in the interest of the Nation.

Note: Documents that do not compromise the security of the Nation are considered as unclassified and are to be marked as **UNCLASSIFIED**



PRECEDENCE

- Letters and papers should be given a precedence marking for rapid handling.
- There are two degrees of precedence:
 - Immediate. Papers marked IMMEDIATE take precedence over all other docs.
 - Priority. Papers marked PRIORITY are given precedence after the docs that are marked as IMMEDIATE.



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COPY NUMBERS

- Individual copy Nos are given to con distr.
- The fol docs are always to be copy numbered:
 - CONFIDENTIAL, SECRET and TOP SECRET docs.
 - Operation and svc sp Os irrespective of sy cl.
 - Classified docs if the originator decides that there is a spl reqmt.



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➤ Copy Nos are to be marked as follows:

- At the top right corner of the first page by one clear line below the precedence or syllable.
- The first page of each **annex, appendix or trace** forming part of a copy numbered document.
- Copy No is to be written in the form of “**Copy No ... of ... copies**”.
- If there is only one copy, it is to be marked as “**Only Copy**”.



- Three or less No of action addressees mentioned in the addressees blk, the copy No should be stated against each addressee within brackets as (Copy No...).
- The distr is to show the disposal of copies in the fol form in the distr list.

Distr:**Copy No:**



TOTAL PAGES

- The total No of pages incl annexes excluding encls, of all copy numbered docs are to be shown on the front page.
- The total is shown imm below the copy No (Copy No 2 of 6 copies).

Copy No 2 of 6 copies
Total pages 15



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Document A is **SECRET** and contains 20 pages

Annex A is **RESTRICTED** and contains 10 pages

Annex B is **SECRET** and contains 4 pages

The total No of pages in Doc A is 34

➤ Enclosures are treated as separate docs

Document B is **SECRET** and contains 15 pages

Attached 15 pages as an encl

The total No of pages in Doc B is 15



IDENTIFYING REFERENCE

- All svc docs have an identifying ref as a No or Nos, a series of letters or a combination of both.

01
2025/01
G/OPS
G/OPS/2025/01 ()



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- Supplementary docs other than encl are to include the ref of the parent doc.

ANNEX A TO
G/OPS/2025/01 ()
DATED MAY 25

APPENDIX 1 TO
ANNEX A TO
G/OPS/2025/01 ()
DATED MAY 25

- The identifying ref is placed opposite the last line of the originator's address.
- The identifying ref is normally the originator's file No.



ADDRESS OF SENDER

- The address of the sender is shown that the addressee can reply to the author.
- The form of the address depends on the type of doc.
- The address starts one clear line below the last elm above it.
- The last line of the senders address should be in capitals (ctry or post town).



- The post code is normally shown in parallel to the post town keeping one space.
- The tel No is to be shown one clear line below the last line of the sender's address.
- E-mail address to be shown imm below the tel No.



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ADDRESSEES

- The full address is unnec, if the intended office is clearly known.

Chief of Defence Staff
Commanders of the Army

- Action addressees should not exceed more than three.
- If there are more than three action addressees, insert “See Distr”.
- If there are info addressees, it should be written in the subscription.



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- The addressee or “See Distr” is shown one clear line below the tel No or e-mail address.
- Where the “See Distr” is used, the addressees are listed as shown in the e.g. below:

Distr:

Commander of the Army
Commander of the Navy
Commander of the Air Force
Inspector Generals’ of Police



Distr:

External:

Action:

GS Branch SF HQ (J) PALALY [Attn: GSO 2 (Ops)]

CO SLNS Gemunu [Attn: CLO (U) West]

Base Cmdr SLAF Base VNA (Attn: OCA)



DATE

- The date is usually shown opposite the last line of the addressee's address at the rt tab. Sometimes **lt tab**.
- The day of the month is inserted in manuscript in front of the month.



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LAYOUT OF THE TEXT

- Salutation.
- Headings.
- References.
- Paragraph Nos.

UNCLASSIFIED


අරමුණු සේවා සේවා සහ සාමාන්‍ය පිටුපස, සපුගස්කන්ද, ශ්‍රී ලංකාව
பாதுகாப்பு சேவைகள் கட்டிடங்கள் மற்றும் ஸ்தலத்தின் கட்டுப்பாடு, சபுகாஸ்கண்டா, இலங்கை
DEFENCE SERVICES COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE, SAPUGASKANDA, SRI LANKA
දකුණු සේවා සේවා සහ සාමාන්‍ය පිටුපස, සපුගස්කන්ද, ශ්‍රී ලංකාව
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DSCSC/25/1/ORG

The Manager
Rathnapala (Pvt) Ltd
No. 25
Bans Road
COLOMBO

05 February 2014

Dear Sir

OFFICERS' MESS ENTERTAINMENT

1. Thank you for your letter S/PW/450 dated 20 January 2014 and it is hereby confirmed that your quotation of Rs. 25,000.00 for the visit of the 'Mega Band' to Officers' Mess of Defence Services Command and Staff College on 23 March 2014 has been accepted.
2. You are kindly informed that the band should play from 9 pm on 23 March to 2.30 am on 24 March 2014 with a two hours rest in between. Refreshment and meals will be provided for all members of the band during the period of their performance.
3. The Bank of Ceylon cheque bearing serial No. 02687802 amounting to Rs. 25,000.00 being the settlement is forwarded herewith. Please acknowledge receipt.
4. Your kind assistance in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

AVN Silva
AVN SILVA
Brigadier
Brigadier Coordinating
for Commandant

UNCLASSIFIED



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SALUTATION

- The salutation starts at the It tab and is not followed by a comma.
- The ranks should not be abbreviated.
- Two clear lines from addressees and heading.

Army War College
BUTTALA

May 2025

Dear Sir

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR JUNIOR STAFF COURSE



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(b) One or more subdivision can be made:	
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ii.	
4. Paragraph. Concluding remark if required.	
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HEADINGS

- Headings should not be a part of any sentence.
- The fol types of headings are used in a text of a paper:

Ser	Heading	Letters		Alignment	Punctuations	Numbering
1	Subject heading	Block Capital	Bold Underlined	Center	Not followed by punctuation	No
2	Main heading					
3	Group heading					
4	Paragraph heading	First Letter Capital		Left Align	Followed by full stop	Yes
5	Sub-paragraph heading					



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REFERENCES

- The ref is written two clear lines below the subj heading and It aligned.
- If there is more than one ref, it will be numbered by alphabetically, and if not, it will not be numbered.
- If the ref is not sent to all addressees, the abbn “not to all” (NOTAL) is used.
- If the ref is enclosed for convenience, it is annotated as “Enclosed”.



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References:

- A. AHQ ltr G/Trg/23(41) dated 23 Jan 14 (NOTAL).
- B. HQ Armed Bde ltr G/Ops/1 dated 25 Jan 14 (Enclosed).
- C. Tele con between BM and GSO 3 (Ops) on 29 Jan 14.
- D. AFHQ/C 123/1/DOPS dated 30 Jan 14 (Copied to D Ops only).
- E. C of N Letter No NAHA 123 dated 18 Feb 14.
- F. Conversation between Comd SFHQ(J), Comd 51 Div and D Ops on 28 Feb 14.
- G. This HQ ltr G/Ops/1 dated 30 Mar 14.
- H. My even no ltr dated 01 Apr 14.



References:

- A. Your HQ dated 02 Apr 14.
- B. Armd Bde msg G/Trg/2 DTG 230900 Jan 14.
- C. Chart No 815 - Approaches to Trincomalee.
- D. Map ABMP Sri Lanka Batticaloa. Sheet 45, Edition 1, 1:50,000.
- E. Maps ABMP Sri Lanka, Sheets 46, 47, 48, 55 and 56, Edition 1, 1:50,000.

Note:

1. ABMP (Agriculture Based Mapping Project).
2. If there is more than one map of the same scale and same ctry only the No to be maintained.



PARAGRAPH NUMBERS

- Paragraphs are numbered in Arabic numerals or lettered alphabetically followed by a full stop.
- Single paragraph is not numbered.
- A para can never have a single sub-para.
- The letter of condolence should never be numbered.



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(i)

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- Signature blk.
- Supplementary docs.
- Distribution.
- Page No.

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b. The ltr is signed either by the base/gp comd or CO or by an offr, on behalf of them. In the case where routine ltr are originated by a Svc HQ, they may be signed by the Comd/CO/Dir or by a staff offr on behalf of them. 3. If there are more than three addressees, then the words 'See Distr' is written on the top, under the file ref, and the list of addressees are given at the bottom left of the ltr. If there are three or less addressees, then the addresses are written in place of the words 'See Distr'. 4. Routine ltrs are to make max use of abbns in the superscription and in the subscription.	
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- The signature blk contains:
- The initials and name of the signatory in blk capitals and bold.
 - The respective signatory's rank.
 - The originating auth which may either be the signatory's appt or for.

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Maj

BM

C WEERATHUNGA SLAC

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ANNEXES

- Referred to in the text of the parent doc with the same heading of the annex.
- If there is more than one annex, it will be numbered by alphabetically and if there is only one annex it will not be.
- Listed consecutively in the subscription and followed by a full stop.
- Identified in the subscription using the exact wording of their subj heading.



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- Attached so that they can be read without turning the doc.
- Annexes should normally be att to the doc.
- The ref blk in the top rt margin of the first page.
- It should contain the originator's identifying ref of the parent doc.
- When annexes issue separately from the main doc, the list of annexes should be annotated to "follow" (to fol).



Annex: Task Distribution for Junior Staff Course

Annexes:

A. Analysis of Casualties.

B. Supplementary Laboratory Information (to fol).

ANNEX TO

HQ 53 INF DIV/G/MISC/23 (40)

DATED MAY 25

ANNEX A TO

HQ 53 INF DIV/G/MISC/23 (40)

DATED MAY 25



APPENDICES

- Referred to in the text of parent annex.
- Numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals.
- Contained its own subj heading as at annex.
- Copy numbered if the sy cl is above confi.
- Show identifying ref of the main doc.

APPENDIX 1 TO ANNEX A TO
HQ 53 INF DIV/G/MISC/23 (40)
DATED MAY 25



ENCLOSURES

- Enclosure are complete in themselves sent with the parent doc.
- Enclosure are listed numerically at the end of the parent doc under heading 'Enclosures'.
- Enclosures are independent in nature and may contain extractions from other docs.
- The subj heading of the encl should be referred in the parent doc.



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- Use the term as Distr.



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 - The signature blk indicates that it is the only page.
 - Documents with more than one page are numbered consecutively, starting with '1'.
 - The page No is placed at the bottom centre of each page with one clear line above the sy cl.
 - The pages of each annex or appendix, including single page, are numbered in a separate series consisting of the annex letter, or annex letter and appendix number.

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1 then 2 ...and 9.

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Single page docs are not page numbered.

In a doc with chapters
1-1.

Page 2 of Annex A.
A-2

Page 3 of Appendix 1 to Annex B.
B1-3



➤ The rules for the docs which are classified as CONFIDENTIAL and above:

- All pages, including single page docs are numbered consecutively.
- The page No is placed centrally at the bottom of the page with one clear line above the sy cl.



In a doc of 9 pages
1 of 9 then 2 of 9 ...and 9 of 9.

In a single page doc 1 of 1.

In a doc with chapters
1-1 of 9.

In Annex A of one page
A-1 of 1.

In Appendix 2 (3 pages) to Annex B:
B2-1 of 3 then B2-2 of 3, B2-3 of 3.

CONCLUSION

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