

# DC STYLE GUIDE

## FORMALITIES MATTER

In the Federal Government, rank and title are integral. Using formal titles is a sign of respect, and necessary for your message to be impactful.

Typically, if someone is an elected official, a member of the armed forces, or in a position requiring Senate confirmation, you will need to use official titles. However, when in doubt, err on the side of more respect and address them by their full title.

**FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND SENIOR AGENCY LEADERSHIP  
(DEPUTY DIRECTOR/ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND ABOVE)  
DO NOT ADDRESS THEM BY ONLY THEIR FIRST NAME UNTIL DIRECTED TO DO SO.**

POSITION	LETTER ADDRESS	LETTER GREETING	SPOKEN GREETING
President of the United States	The President	Dear Mr./Ms. President	Mr./Ms. President
Vice President	The Vice President	Dear Mr./Ms. Vice President	Dear Mr./Ms. Vice President
Cabinet Members	The Honorable [full name] Secretary of [Agency]	Dear Mr./Madam Secretary	Mr./Madam Secretary
Chief Justice	The Chief Justice	Dear Mr./Madam Chief Justice	Mr./Madam Chief Justice
Associate Justice	Dear Mr./Madam Justice	Dear Mr./Madam Justice	Mr./Madam Justice
Judge	The Honorable Judge [full name] [full official title on second line]	Dear Judge [last name]	Judge [last name]
United States Senator	The Honorable [full name]	Dear Senator [last name]	Senator [last name]
Speaker of the House	The Honorable [full name] Speaker of the House of Representatives	Dear Mr./Madam Speaker	Mr./Madam Speaker
United States Representative	The Honorable [full name]	Dear Representative [last name]	Representative [last name]
Ambassador, American	The Honorable [full name] Ambassador of the United States to [full country name]	Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador	Mr./Madam Ambassador
Ambassador, Foreign	His/Her Excellency [full name] Ambassador of [full country name]	Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador	Mr./Madam Ambassador
Military Personnel	Full rank is used as title only in addressing letters and formal introductions	General, Colonel, Admiral, etc.	General, Colonel, Admiral, etc.
Agency Director	[full name] [full official title on second line]	Dear Director [full name]	Director [full name]