



## (U) The A-B-Cs of Determining an Officer's Rank

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SIGINT Communications (S02C)  
Run Date: 08/21/2006

(U) Civilians: do you know how to spot a military member's rank?

(U) Each rank in the US military has its own insignia. For the warrant officer and enlisted ranks, these insignia differ from one Service to the next, which makes for quite a few different variables. Luckily (for beginners), **insignia for commissioned officers are the same across all of the military Services**, and therefore are a good place to start.

(U) There are a total of 10 commissioned officer pay grades, O-1 (the lowest) through O-10 (the highest). Each pay grade has a unique insignia associated with it, as you'll see below. These insignia are worn on the collar and (depending on the Service and the uniform) on shoulder epaulettes.

(U) Note, however, that within the pay grades, the rank **titles** vary: for officers, one title is used by the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps, and another title is used by the Navy and Coast Guard. Note also that the insignia for O-1/O-2, and for O-4/O-5 are the same except for their color. In both cases, the silver represents a higher rank than the gold.

### Commissioned Officers Rank Insignia

#### Company-Grade Officers :



#### **O-1 Insignia: Single gold bar**

Second Lieutenant (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Ensign (Navy/Coast Guard)



#### **O-2 Insignia: Single silver bar**

First Lieutenant (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Lieutenant Junior Grade (Navy/Coast Guard)



#### **O-3 Insignia: Double silver bars**

Captain (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Lieutenant (Navy/Coast Guard)

#### Field-Grade Officers :



#### **O-4 Insignia: Gold oak leaf**

Major (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Lieutenant Commander (Navy/Coast Guard)



#### **O-5 Insignia: Silver oak leaf**

Lieutenant Colonel (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Commander (Navy/Coast Guard)



**O-6 Insignia: Silver eagle**

Colonel (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) ( *informally called a "full, bird Colonel "*) or  
Captain (Navy/Coast Guard) (*Note that a Navy or Coast Guard Captain (O-6) is a higher rank  
than a Captain in the other Services (O-3).*)

Flag Officers (often referred to as "one-star," "two-star," etc.):



**O-7 Insignia: One silver star**

Brigadier General (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Rear Admiral [Lower Half] (Navy/Coast Guard)



**O-8 Insignia: Two silver stars**

Major General (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Rear Admiral [Upper Half] (Navy/Coast Guard)



**O-9 Insignia: Three silver stars**

Lieutenant General (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Vice Admiral (Navy/Coast Guard)



**O-10 Insignia: Four silver stars**

General (Army/Air Force/Marine Corps) or  
Admiral (Navy/Coast Guard)

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(U) Naval and Coast Guard officers wear additional "sleeve-type" insignia on some of their uniforms, which we won't get into here. For details on that, see the document [Rank Recognition in a Joint Service Environment](#), from which this article is derived.

(U) For more on military basics, see the following SID *today* articles:

- [\(U\) The A-B-Cs of Military Protocol](#)
- [\(U\) Rank Abbreviations](#)
- [\(U\) What Is a J-2?](#)

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