

Military rank equivalency

Although GS civilians do not have military rank by virtue of their GS position, regulations include civilian and military grade equivalencies for pay and protocol comparison purposes. Military rank or civilian grade often have no bearing on supervisory precedence—generally, precedence and authority are guided by situational expertise. For example, a GS-9 is considered comparable to a [first lieutenant](#) or [lieutenant \(junior grade\)](#) (O-2), while a GS-15 (top of the General Schedule) is the equivalent grade of a [colonel](#) or [captain](#) (O-6). Senior Executive Service (SES) and Senior Level grades correspond for protocol purposes to [flag and general officers](#) (admirals and generals).

Grade equivalencies were created by the U.S. [Department of Defense](#) for the purpose of treating civilians serving alongside the Armed Forces who have been captured as [prisoners of war](#) according to the [Geneva Convention](#).^[6]

Geneva Convention Category	GS	MILITARY
V: General Officer	Senior Executive Service	O-7 through O-10
	GS-15	O-6
IV: Field Grade Officer	GS-14/GS-13	O-5
	GS-12	O-4
		O-3
III: Company Grade Officer	GS-11/GS-10	O-2 and W-4/W-3
	GS-9/GS-8	3
	GS-7	O-1 and W-2/W-1
II: Non-commissioned Officer/Staff Non-Comissioned Officer	GS-6	E-7 through E-9
	GS-5	E-6/E-5
	GS-4	E-4
I: Enlisted	GS-1 through GS-3	E-1 through E-3

Grade equivalencies have also been issued by the U.S. [Department of State](#) for other purposes, such as assignment of permanent and transient housing to eligible civilian employees.

Comparison of Military and Civilian Equivalent Grades

Military		Civilian	
Military Grade	Rank	White Collar (GS/GM)	Blue Collar (FWS)
O-10	Admiral		
O-9	Vice Admiral	SES*	
O-8	Rear Admiral (Upper Half)	SES*/GS-16,17, or 18	
O-7	Rear Admiral (Lower Half)	SES*/GS-16,17, or 18	
O-6	Captain	GS/GM-15	Ships Pilots,
O-5	Commander	GS/GM-13-14	WS-14 thru WS-19,

O-4	Lt. Commander	GS/-12	WT-15
O-3	Lieutenant	GS-10-11	
O-2	Lieutenant (J.G.)	GS-8-9	
O-1	Ensign	GS-7	WS-8 thru WS-11 WL-8 thru WL-14
W-4	Chief Warrant	GS-8-9	WG-12 thru WG-15
W-3	Chief Warrant	GS-8-9	
W-2	Chief Warrant	GS-7	
W-1	Warrant Officer	GS-7	
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer	GS-6	
E-8	Senior Chief Petty Officer	GS-6	WS-1 thru WS-7
E-7	Chief Petty Officer	GS-6	WL-1 thru WL-5
E-6	Petty Officer 1 st Class	GS-5	WG-9 thru WG-11
E-5	Petty Officer 2 nd Class	GS-4	
E-4	Petty Officer 3 rd Class	GS-4	
E-3	Seaman	GS-1-3	WG-1 thru WG-8
E-2	Seaman Apprentice	GS-1-3	
E-1	Seaman Recruit	GS-1-3	

*All SES [Senior Executive Service] are considered equivalent to "Flag" rank. However, the specific position determines their equivalency within the "Flag" level. For example, a Deputy Commander of a Systems Command would be considered the same as what a military would be in a similar position.

Military		Civilian Grade Group			
Grade Groups	Rank	<u>GS/SES</u>	<u>NF</u>	<u>WG/WL/WS</u>	<u>NA/NL/NS</u>
O-10	 General	SES	NF-6	n/a	n/a
O-9	 Lt. General	SES	NF-6	n/a	n/a
O-8	 Maj. General	SES	NF-6	n/a	n/a
O-7	 Brg. General	SES	NF-6	n/a	n/a
O-6	 Colonel	GS 15	NF-5	n/a	n/a
O-5	 Lt. Colonel	GS 13/14	NF-5	WS 14-19, WS-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 14-19 NL 15

O-4	 Major	GS 12	NF-4	WS 14-19, WS-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 14-19 NL 15
O-3	 Captain	GS 10/11	NF-4	WG-8, WS-13 WL 6-14, WG 12-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 8-13 NL 6-14 NA 12-15
O-2	 1st Lieutenant	GS 9	NF-4	WG-8, WS-13 WL 6-14, WG 12-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 8-13 NL 6-14 NA 12-15
O-1	 2nd Lieutenant	GS 7	NF-3	WG-8, WS-13 WL 6-14, WG 12-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 8-13 NL 6-14 NA 12-15
W-4	 Chief Warrant Officer	GS 8	NF-3	WG-8, WS-13 WL 6-14, WG 12-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 8-13 NL 6-14 NA 12-15
W-3	 Chief Warrant Officer	GS 8	NF-3	WG-8, WS-13 WL 6-14, WG 12-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 8-13 NL 6-14 NA 12-15
W-2	 Chief Warrant Officer	GS 7	NF-3	WG-8, WS-13 WL 6-14, WG 12-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 8-13 NL 6-14 NA 12-15
W-1	 Warrant Officer	GS 7	NF-3	WG-8, WS-13 WL 6-14, WG 12-15 & Production Support Equivalent	NS 8-13 NL 6-14 NA 12-15
E-9	 Sergeant Major	GS 6	NF-3	WS 1-7 WL 1-5 WS 9-11	NS 1-7 NL 1-5 NA 9-11
E-9	 Master Gunnery Sergeant	GS 6	NF-3	WS 1-7 WL 1-5 WS 9-11	NS 1-7 NL 1-5 NA 9-11
E-8	 1st Sergeant	GS 6	NF-3	WS 1-7 WL 1-5 WS 9-11	NS 1-7 NL 1-5 NA 9-11
E-8	 Master Sergeant	GS 6	NF-3	WS 1-7 WL 1-5 WS 9-11	NS 1-7 NL 1-5 NA 9-11

E-7	 Gunnery Sergeant	GS 6	NF-3	WS 1-7 WL 1-5 WS 9-11	NS 1-7 NL 1-5 NA 9-11
E-6	 Staff Sergeant	GS 5	NF-3	WS 1-7 WL 1-5 WS 9-11	NS 1-7 NL 1-5 NA 9-11
E-5	 Sergeant	GS 5	NF-3	WS 1-7 WL 1-5 WS 9-11	NS 1-7 NL 1-5 NA 9-11
E-4	 Corporal	GS 4	NF-2	WG 1-8	NA 1-8
E-3	 Lance Corporal	GS 3	NF-2	WG 1-8	NA 1-8
E-2	 Private 1st Class	GS 2-3	NF-2	WG 1-8	NA 1-8
E-1	 Private	GS 1/2	NF-1	WG 1-8	NA 1-8

GS/SES = General Schedule/Senior Executive Service. SES covers managerial, supervisory and policy positions above grade 15 that are not filled by presidential appointment with senate confirmation. The General Schedule consists of 15 grades, each broadly defined in law in terms of difficulty and responsibility of the work and the qualifications required for its performance.

NF = Nonappropriated Fund Entry Through Executive

- **NF-1** Junior Clerical/Customer Service
- **NF-2** Senior Clerical/Customer Service
- **NF-3** Specialist/Management
- **NF-4** Senior Specialist/Management
- **NF-5** Top Management
- **NF-6** Senior Executive

WG/WL/WS = Federal Wage System. This Grade Group covers employees in pay plans covered only by the Federal Wage System (FWS), the major pay system covering trade, craft, and labor occupations in the Federal Government.

NA/NL/NS includes all nonappropriated crafts, trades, and labor positions

- NA Nonsupervisory positions
- NL Leader positions
- NS Supervisory positions