

PLACER COUNTY ARES

# Basic Message Text

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## Placer ARES Text Passing Rules

**Brad Stewart, KM6RIW**  
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Special thanks to Carl N6CKV, and Greg KG6SJT, for their assistance

This basic training summarizes the rules used by Placer County ARES for passing formal text-based messages using “voice” over a radio. It was developed and presented by Brad Stewart KM6RIW. Please send any corrections or comments to him or Placer County ARES.

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## Introduction

The mission of ARES is to “pass” emergency messages using amateur radio equipment and licensed operators. We endeavor to reproduce a formal message exactly as it originated. That includes any misspellings or the use of incorrect words. We strive to simply be a copy-machine.

We prefer using the ICS-213 message form (ARES Version), but may need to use a served agency’s specific form or simply a blank piece of paper. We encourage the use of text in all uppercase.

Sometimes there are multiple correct ways to read the message text. We need to always be flexible. When reading message text be sure to go slow enough to allow the receiver to write each word. It’s a good idea to silently spell each word after saying it to allow some extra time.

## Punctuation

All end-of-sentence periods “.” within the message will be replaced with the single letter “X”. The one exception is, if the message ends with a period, then the last period is simply dropped.

## Standard symbols

Note that any symbol may be inserted using the standard pro-word “[symbol for ...](#)” followed by the name of the symbol. The name is recorded within one word box.

- DOT for “.”
- SLASH for “/”
- COMMA for “,”
- QUERY for “?”
- ATSIGN for “@”
- COLON for “:”
- UNDERSCORE for “\_”
- HYPHEN for “-”
- BACKSLASH for “\”

## Standard ITU phonetics

Alpha	Hotel	Oscar	Victor
Bravo	India	Papa	Whiskey
Charlie	Juliet	Quebec	X-ray
Delta	Kilo	Romeo	Yankee
Echo	Lima	Sierra	Zulu
Foxtrot	Mike	Tango	
Golf	November	Uniform	

## Pro-words (procedural words) or Introducers

... I spell ...	Amateur call ...
Initial, initials ...	Telephone figures ...
Figure, figures ...	Web address ...
Mixed group figures ...	Email address ...
Mixed group ...	Symbol for ...
Date figures ...	Lowercase ...
Time figures ...	Mixed case, lower, upper

## Acronyms

Acronyms are letters used to shorthand some common terms. They may be pronounced as words, or simply spelled. Each acronym letter is the initial letter of another word. For example, ARES is an acronym for Amateur Radio Emergency Service, and normally is pronounced. EC is an acronym for Emergency Coordinator and normally it's just spelled. Some other common acronyms are ASAP, ETA, EOC, OES, UTC and ICS.

Rules for acronyms in ARES messages

1. Always spell acronyms
2. Always use the standard ITU phonetics
3. Record and count each acronym in one word box
4. When spelling an acronym, lead it with "initials"
5. Read each letter individually: example ARES is read as "ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA"
6. ARES policy is to use "plain language", not acronyms, but sometimes they are unavoidable

Example for ARES acronym

It is written in one word box as ARES and read as "ARES initials ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA"

Sample message:

**Contact the Placer County EC for additional information on joining ARES. The EC is Brad KM6RIW.**

Here is the message body only from a form 213. We expect to be reading from this form and for the received form to be identical (word count = 17)

Basic Message Text

December 17, 2020

CONTACT	THE	PLACER	COUNTY	EC
FOR	ADDITIONAL	INFORMATION	ON	JOINING
ARES	X	THE	EC	IS
BRAD	KM6RIW			

One possible reading:

[This is a Placer ARES training message](#)

[Begin message](#)

CONTACT THE PLACER [I spell](#) PAPA LIMA ALPHA CHARLIE ECHO ROMEO  
COUNTY EC [initials](#) ECHO CHARLIE *(break)*

FOR [I spell](#) FOXTROT OSCAR ROMEO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON JOINING *(break)*

ARES [initials](#) ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA [initial](#) X-RAY THE EC [initials](#) ECHO CHARLIE IS *(break)*

BRAD [I spell](#) BRAVO ROMEO ALPHA DELTA [amateur call](#) KILO MIKE SIX ROMEO INDIA WHISKEY  
[End of message](#)

[This was a Placer ARES training message](#)

[Word count 17](#)

[Do you need any fills or corrections?](#) *(break)*

Do not say “*(break)*”, but un-key and listen for questions, comments, emergency traffic, etc.

## Frequencies

Radio frequencies are common in messages. The formal way to pass a radio frequency is to replace the decimal point "." with the letter "R". Less formal messages may retain the decimal. We need to be ready for either way.

Rules for radio frequencies in messages

1. Read each digit individually: example 43 is read as "Four Three", not forty-three
2. Record and count each frequency in one word box
3. When reading a frequency, lead it with "*mixed group figures*"
4. It's preferred to replace the decimal point with the letter "R" and read as "ROMEO"
5. Optionally, retain the decimal point and read as "DECIMAL". Do not use DOT since the single frequency would be expected to occupy 3 work boxes like 145 DOT 43.

Example for frequency

The frequency 145.43 is written in one box as 145R43 and read as "*mixed group figures* One Four Five Romeo Four Three" or optionally, "*mixed group figures* One Four Five DECIMAL Four Three"

Sample message:

The repeaters used for Placer ARES for a disaster are  
 W6EK 145.43  
 K6IOK 145.13  
 W6SAR AUBURN 145.27  
 W6SAR ROSEVILLE 146.64  
 W6AK 146.91

Here is the message body only from a form 213. We expect to be reading from this form and for the received form to be identical.

THE	REPEATERS	USED	FOR	PLACER
ARES	FOR	A	DISASTER	ARE
W6EK	145R43	K6IOK	145R13	W6SAR
AUBURN	145R27	W6SAR	ROSEVILLE	146R64
W6AK	146R91			

One possible reading:

This is a Placer ARES training message

Begin message

THE REPEATERS USED FOR I spell FOXTROT OSCAR ROMEO PLACER I spell PAPA LIMA ALPHA CHARLIE  
ECHO ROMEO *(break)*

initials ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA FOR I spell FOXTROT OSCAR ROMEO

initial ALPHA DISASTER ARE I spell ALPHA ROMEO ECHO *(break)*

amateur call WHISKY SIX ECHO KILO mixed group figures ONE FOUR FIVE ROMEO FOUR THREE

amateur call KILO SIX INDIA OSCAR KILO mixed group figures ONE FOUR FIVE ROMEO ONE THREE

amateur call WHISKY SIX SIERRA ALPHA ROMERO *(break)*

AUBURN I spell ALPHA UNIFORM BRAVO UNIFORM ROMEO NOVEMBER

mixed group figures ONE FOUR FIVE ROMEO TWO SEVEN

amateur call WHISKY SIX SIERRA ALPHA ROMERO

ROSEVILLE I spell ROMEO OSCAR SIERRA ECHO VICTOR INDIA LIMA LIMA ECHO

mixed group figures ONE FOUR SIX ROMEO SIX FOUR *(break)*

amateur call WHISKY SIX ALPHA KILO mixed group figures ONE FOUR SIX ROMEO NINER ONE

End of message *(break)*

This was a Placer ARES training message

Word count 22

Do you need any fills or corrections? *(break)*

Do not say “*(break)*”, but unkey and listen for question, comment, emergency traffic, etc.

## Dates and Times

Sometimes there are multiple correct ways to read the message text. Dates and times fall into this category. You may use “figures”, “date figures” or “mixed figures” for a date, and you may use “figures”, “time figures” or “mixed figures” for a time. Remember that pro-words, like “time figures” are not written in the message text. They are simply spoken (and heard) to give a clue to the person receiving on how to copy the text. In that context, “date figures” and “time figures” are preferred, since they give a better clue of what’s coming.

Times normally use the 24-hour clock like military time, 0800 or 1930. The time format is a string of 4 figures, HHMM, which is hour/minute. Use a leading zero to get a two digit hour or minute. Note that dates and times are generally local and based on the original sender’s location. Use the letter “Z” immediately following a date or time to show it is a UTC, GMT or “Zulu” time.

When we use the ICS-213 form for messages, we will use the same rules and pro-words for items in headers, signatures and replies that we are learning for the message body. The ICS-213 form contains a date and a time in the header boxes for when the message originated. The date format is a string of 6 figures, MMDDYY, which is month/day/year.

Four digit years are generally preferred, but two digit years are acceptable, like 2020, instead of just 20. Use a leading zero to get a two digit month or day. This string of figures, common in the header, can be confusing in the message body, so we normally just use a spelled month, day and year, depending on what’s needed. Like “January 6 2020” and record this in three word boxes instead of just one box.

### Rules for times in ARES message header

1. Record and count the time in one word box
2. Do not include punctuation like “:” or “am” or “pm”
3. Read each number individually: example 1930 is read as “ONE NINER THREE ZERO”, not nineteen thirty
4. When reading a time, lead it with “*time figures*” or “*figures*”. Do not use “*figures*” if the time ends with a “Z”. Use “*time figures*” or “*mixed figures*”

### Rules for dates in ARES message header

1. Do not include punctuation like “/” or “-”
2. Read each number individually. Example 010620 is read as “ZERO ONE ZERO SIX TWO ZERO”
3. When reading a date, lead it with “*date figures*” or “*figures*”. Do not use “*figures*” if the date ends with a “Z”. Use “*date figures*” or “*mixed figures*”

### Examples for dates and times

1. Dates and times are written in one word box each. If the message has a date, followed immediately by a time, then use two word boxes. Read “010620 1930” from two word boxes as “*date figures* ZERO ONE ZERO SIX TWO ZERO *time figures* ONE NINER THREE ZERO”
2. If a UTC time is desired, use a “Z” suffix. “0330Z” is read as “*time figures* ZERO THREE THREE ZERO ZULU”



Sample message:

Placer ARES meets Sunday nights at 1930. Beginning January 2020 each team member should read 2 training messages and act as net control 2 times per year.

Here is the message body only from a form 213. We expect to be reading from this form and for the received form to be identical (word count = 28)

PLACER	ARES	MEETS	SUNDAY	NIGHTS
AT	1930	X	BEGINNING	JANUARY
2020	EACH	TEAM	MEMBER	SHOULD
READ	2	TRAINING	MESSAGES	AND
ACT	AS	NET	CONTROL	2
TIMES	PER	YEAR		

One possible reading:

[This is a Placer ARES training message](#)

[Begin message](#)

PLACER I spell PAPA LIMA ALPHA CHARLIE ECHO ROMERO initials ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA MEETS SUNDAY NIGHTS (break)

AT time figures ONE NINER THREE ZERO initial X-RAY BEGINNING JANUARY (break)

figures TWO ZERO TWO ZERO EACH TEAM MEMBER SHOULD (break)

READ figure TWO TRAINING MESSAGES AND (break)

ACT AS NET CONTROL figure TWO (break)

TIMES PER YEAR

[End of message \(break\)](#)

[This was a Placer ARES training message](#)

[Word count 28](#)

[Do you need any fills or corrections? \(break\)](#)

Do not say “(break)”, but un-key and listen for questions, comments, emergency traffic, etc.

## Amateur Radio Call Signs

Call signs are preceded by “amateur call”.

## Telephone Numbers

Telephone numbers are written as 3 words, the area code, the exchange prefix and the number. So the telephone or cell phone number 916-555-1212 occupies 3 word boxes. It would be read as “**telephone figures**” NINER ONE SIX, “**figures**” FIVE FIVE FIVE, “**figures**” ONE TWO ONE TWO.

## Web and Email Addresses

With the popularity of the internet, we should expect to see more web and email addresses within ARES message traffic. These present a very unusual format and can be confusing. We need to be ready to “pass” these addresses within our emergency communication traffic. Since a single character mistake would render a web or email address unusable, there is a lot of spelling for addresses to assure accuracy.

You should realize that when you see or hear the pro-words “web address” or “email address” that multiple words will follow. Any punctuation characters within the address will become spelled words. Like the “.” becomes the word DOT. Characters between the punctuations are treated as separate words. So a web address like [WWW.ARRL.ORG](http://WWW.ARRL.ORG) will become 5 words: WWW DOT ARRL DOT ORG.

Rules for reading web addresses in ARES messages

1. When reading a web address, start it with the pro-words “**web address**”
2. Always spell all words within the address
3. The address is divided into separate words based on the punctuation characters. We must include punctuation like “.” or “/” or “:”
4. Punctuation characters are replaced with spelled words. Like DOT (D-O-T). Or SLASH, or COLON. Punctuation words, like DOT, will occupy one word box
5. Beware some addresses and words may be very long

Rules for reading email addresses in ARES messages

1. When reading an email address, start it with the pro-words “**email address**”
2. Always spell all words within the address
3. The address is divided into separate words based on the punctuation characters. We must include punctuation like “@” or “.” or “\_” or “-”
4. Punctuation characters are replaced with spelled words. Replace “@” with the single word ATSIGN (A-T-S-I-G-N one word) and then spell it phonetically. Also use DOT, UNDERSCORE and HYPHEN, as needed. Punctuation words will occupy one word box
5. Beware some addresses and words may be very long

Examples for web and email addresses

1. For the web address [WWW.ARRL.ORG](http://WWW.ARRL.ORG) we would read this as “web address WHISKY WHISKY WHISKY DOT I spell DELTA OSCAR TANGO initials ALPHA ROMEO ROMEO LIMA DOT I spell DELTA OSCAR TANGO ORG I spell OSCAR ROMEO GOLF” and we copy this one web address into 5 word boxes.
2. For email address [N6CKV@ARRL.NET](mailto:N6CKV@ARRL.NET) we would read this as “email address amateur call NOVEMBER SIX CHARLIE KILO VICTOR ATSIGN I spell ALPHA TANGO SIERRA INDIA GOLF NOVEMBER initials ALPHA ROMEO ROMEO LIMA DOT I spell DELTA OSCAR TANGO NET I spell NOVEMBER ECHO TANGO. We copy this one email address into 5 word boxes.
3. For the web address <https://groups.io> we would read this as “web address HOTEL TANGO TANGO PAPA SIERRA COLON I spell CHARLIE OSCAR LIMA OSCAR NOVEMBER SLASH I spell SIERRA LIMA ALPHA SIERRA HOTEL SLASH I spell SIERRA LIMA ALPHA SIERRA HOTEL GROUPS I spell GOLF ROMEO OSCAR UNIFORM PAPA SIERRA DOT I spell DELTA OSCAR TANGO initials INDIA OSCAR”. We copy this one web address into 7 word boxes.

Sample message:

Anyone interested in joining Placer ARES should make email contact with Carl at [N6CKV@arrl.net](mailto:N6CKV@arrl.net) or the AEC at [KG6LSB@arrl.net](mailto:KG6LSB@arrl.net)

Here is the message body only from a form 213. We expect to be reading from this form and for the received form to be identical (word count = 27)

ANYONE	INTERESTED	IN	JOINING	PLACER
ARES	SHOULD	MAKE	EMAIL	CONTACT
WITH	CARL	AT	N6CKV	ATSIGN
ARRL	DOT	NET	OR	THE
AEC	AT	KG6LSB	ATSIGN	ARRL
DOT	NET			

One possible reading:

[This is a Placer ARES training message](#)

[Begin message](#)

ANYONE INTERESTED IN JOINING PLACER I spell PAPA LIMA ALPHA CHARLIE ECHO ROMEO (break)  
 Initials ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA SHOULD MAKE EMAIL I spell ECHO MIKE ALPHA INDIA LIMA  
 CONTACT (break)  
 WITH CARL I spell CHARLIE ALPHA ROMEO LIMA AT email address amateur call NOVEMBER SIX CHARLIE  
 KILO VICOTR ATSIGN I spell ALPHA TANGO SIERRA INDIA GOLF NOVEMBER (break)  
 initials ALPHA ROMEO ROMEO LIMA DOT I spell DELTA OSCAR TANGO NET I spell NOVEMBER ECHO  
 TANGO OR THE (break)

Basic Message Text

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December 17, 2020

Initials ALPHA ECHO CHARLIE AT email address KILO GOLF SIX LIMA SIERRA BRAVO ATSIGN I spell  
ALPHA TANGO SIERRA INDIA GOLF NOVEMBER initials ALPHA ROMEO ROMEO LIMA DOT I spell DELTA  
OSCAR TANGO NET I spell NOVEMBER ECHO TANGO  
End of message *(break)*

This was a Placer ARES training message  
Word count 27  
Do you need any fills or corrections? *(break)*

Do not say “*(break)*”, but unkey and listen for questions, comments, emergency traffic, etc.

## Lowercase within ARES messages

Normally, ARES messages are uppercase only. However, with the increased use of web and email addresses and codes, it's possible that we would need to pass a message that had critical lowercase letters. And, although unlikely, a message sender might also have some critical lowercase requirements within a message.

Note that part of a web or email address is not case sensitive, but part of it could be. The domain name will be correct regardless of what case you use. That is, `www.google.com` is the same as `WWW.GOOGLE.COM` is the same as `wWw.GoOgLe.CoM`.

In the absence of published standard ARES rules, I have created a proposal for use by Placer ARES. We need to remember that these are our own rules and not an accepted standard. There may be a new standard in the future that requires us to change. I tried to keep the rules very simple and understandable, even if you haven't been trained.

There are 2 basic cases I want to address. One, where an entire word needs to be lowercase, and two, where a word contains mixed case, which is both upper and lowercase. Words that begin with a single uppercase letter are common mixed case words, sometimes called "title case". Like "Title" or "Fred". Normally, we assume every word will be uppercase in our messages.

### Rules for lowercase in Placer ARES messages

7. When reading a message containing a lowercase word, simply lead it with the pro-word "*lowercase*". Then pronounce or spell the word. This is a clue that the following single word is all lowercase. When copying the word be sure to write lowercase letters within the word box. When reading, allow extra time for the receiver to write lowercase. Unless specified otherwise (with a new pro-word) assume the following word is back to uppercase.
8. When reading a message containing a word using mixed case, simply lead it with the pro-words "*mixed case I spell*". Then spell it leading each letter with the pro-word "*upper*" or "*lower*".

### Examples for lowercase and mixed case

3. If the sender has a message that reads "... THE CODE IS fred ...". We would write "fred" in one word box all in lowercase letters. And we would read the message as "... THE CODE IS *lowercase* FRED *I spell* FOXTROT ROMEO ECHO DELTA ..."
4. If the lowercase word is a common word, like green, then we would not need to spell it. Simply read it as "... THE CODE IS *lowercase* GREEN".
5. For two consecutive lowercase words, like "... THE CODE IS blue green", we read it as "... THE CODE IS *lowercase* BLUE *lowercase* GREEN". Without the second lowercase pro-word, we would copy "blue GREEN".
6. If the sender has a message that reads "... THE CODE IS Fred ...". We would read it as "... THE CODE IS *mixed case I spell upper* FOXTROT *lower* ROMEO *lower* ECHO *lower* DELTA ..."

Sample message (note underline indicates case sensitive):

Placer ARES is adopting standard rules for lowercase within messages like first SundaY.

Here is the message body only from a form 213. We expect to be reading from this form and for the received form to be identical (word count = 13)

PLACER	ARES	IS	ADOPTING	STANDARD
RULES	FOR	LOWERCASE	WITHIN	MESSAGES
LIKE	first	SundaY		

Note that the message contains the word LOWERCASE not used as a pro-word. To avoid confusion we will spell this word leading it with the pro-word initials.

One possible reading:

This is a Placer ARES training message

Begin message

PLACER I spell PAPA LIMA ALPHA CHARLIE ECHO ROMERO initials ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA  
IS ADOPTING STANDARD *(break)*

RULES FOR I spell FOXTROL OSCAR ROMEO

initials LIMA OSCAR WHISKEY ECHO ROMEO CHARLIE ALPHA SIERRA ECHO

WITHIN MESSAGES *(break)*

LIKE lowercase FIRST mixed case I spell upper SIERRA lower UNIFORM lower NOVEMBER lower DELTA  
lower ALPHA upper YANKEE

End of message *(break)*

This was a Placer ARES training message

Word count 13

Do you need any fills or corrections? *(break)*

Do not say “*(break)*”, but unkey and listen for questions, comments, emergency traffic, etc.

## Forms and Headers, Signature Boxes, Replies

We use the same rules for word boxes in headers or replies that we use for the message body text.

### ARES Message Form (ICS 213) Header boxes

Header Box Label	Sample Contents	Read As ...
Message ID Number	123	MESSAGE figures ONE TWO THREE
Precedence	ROUTINE	PRECEDENCE ROUTINE
From Station	KM6RIW	FROM amateur call KILO MIKE SIX ROMEO INDIA WHISKEY
Check	23	CHECK figures TWO THREE
Place of Origin	Elverta	ORIGIN ELVERTA I spell ECHO LIMA VICTOR ECHO ROMEO TANGO ALPHA
Time Filed	1930	TIME figures ONE NINER THREE ZERO
Date Filed	021719	DATE figures ZERO TWO ONE SEVEN ONE NINER
Incident Name	Camp Fire	INCIDENT CAMP FIRE
To ... Position	Carl/Placer ARES EC	TO CARL I spell CHARLIE ALPHA ROMEO LIMA POSITION PLACER I spell PAPA LIMA ALPHA CHARLIE ECHO ROMEO initials ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA initials ECHO CHARLIE
From ... Position	Brad/ARES member	FROM BRAD I spell BRAVO ROMEO ALPHA DELTA POSITION initials ALPHA ROMEO ECHO SIERRA MEMBER
Subject	Gridley shelter	SUBJECT GRIDLEY I spell GOLF ROMEO INDIA DELTA LIMA ECHO YANKEE SHELTER
		<i>We're already familiar with this</i>
Received From ... initials / position		<i>These next 3 fields are recorded on the original form, but not read or transmitted</i>
Received By (amateur call)		"
Received Time & Date		"

Note that the signature data on the paper form will be filled in by the sender, but not transmitted via the radio.

The form has a section for a reply, but many replies will be created at a later time. Replies need to link back to the original message. We usually do this by identifying the original message number. Say "Reply to message figures 123"

## **Mutual Aid**

The rules presented here may not be standardized by other ARES groups. We need to be very flexible when inter-operating during a “mutual aid” scenario.

## **No Repeater Procedure**

See *Placer County ARES Standard Operating Procedures*.

## **Just some thoughts about using WinLink**

Note that WinLink may be installed on a Windows computer

Note that WinLink may also be installed on an Apple Mac. See [https://www.winlink.org/sites/default/files/downloads/installing\\_rms\\_express\\_on\\_mac.docx\\_.pdf](https://www.winlink.org/sites/default/files/downloads/installing_rms_express_on_mac.docx_.pdf) for installation instructions.



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