

# How to Write a Good Retirement Biography

## General

After having served a career in the Canadian Military Engineers and now moving on to Phase II of their life, our members deserve recognition of that service and best wishes for their future endeavours. The CMEA plays an important role in this transition by publishing a biography on our website.

## Aim

This guideline outlines the components and characteristics of an appropriate biography.

## Retirement Biography Format

The biography should follow a logical format with the right balance between the routine aspects of a career and the appropriate detail of any highlights in terms of achievements or events as appropriate.

- Please do not write the person's UER in narrative form. Make it interesting.
- As a rule, the biography should easily fit on one page -- 400 or so words should be sufficient.
- Use single spacing.
- The biography can be written in English, French or both.
- A 'head & shoulders' photo of the person in uniform should also be included. It should be of sufficient resolution (preferably 300 dpi) to show properly on a webpage. The CMEA will crop and edit the photo if needed so long as the quality is good.

The CMEA does not edit these submissions, so poorly written biographies reflect badly on both the individual and the writer.

See Annex A for more detail and examples. In addition, the CMEA website (<https://cmea-agmc.ca/cme-family-retirements>) has many examples of well-written and effective biographies.

## Style

The style of a retirement biography can be informal, but not casual. Annex B provides some points of style with some examples.

## Legacy Value of a Retirement Biography

Years from now, this person will die and few of us will be around to honour their passing. Family members are likely to write an obituary, but our experience shows most obituaries do not provide a good description of the deceased's military career. Our Retirement narrative may be the only available source without which an appropriate Last Post tribute may not be possible.

A copy of the biography will also be kept in the Personality File at the CME Museum.

A retiring individual should receive a printed copy of their biography and a copy should also be placed on the individual's personnel file.

## Annex A – Elements of a Retirement Biography

Element	Content	Example
<b>Title</b>	Rank, Name, Post-Nominals Centred and bold, Arial 18 px	Sgt Joseph “Joe” Jones, MMM, CD <b>Note:</b> Do not use CD1 or CD2. These are not authorized and really add little. Similarly, Captain (ex-CWO) is also meaningless.
<b>Photo</b>	A recent photo should be included. Normally place these at the top of the page, under the title, justified Left with Word Wrap.	
<b>Introduction</b>	An introduction announces when the person will retire, their length of service and summarizes their career.	Sergeant Joseph “Joe” Jones, MMM, CD will retire from the Canadian Military Engineers on 12 September 2018 after 15 years of service in Canada, Europe, Afghanistan and the Middle East.
<b>Body – Career Summary</b>	The body should begin with some personal details covering the person’s life before they joined the Forces. This should be followed by a chronological summary of the person’s military career. It does not have to have detail any routine and trades progression training but can include notable highlights. Notable tours of duty need to be mentioned	Joe was born and raised in The Pas, MB. He completed high school in 2000 and moved to Winnipeg, MB where he started studies in construction technology at Red River College, graduating in 2002. After working in Fort McMurray, AB for a while, Joe enlisted in the Canadian Military Engineers in Edmonton in 2003.  Joe completed his basic training in St-Jean, QC followed by Trades Training at CFSME. He served in Cold Lake, AB before deploying to Afghanistan in 2006. On return, he was posted to the CE section in Trenton followed two years later with a posting to SHAPE HQ in Brussels, Belgium. On promotion to Sergeant in 2009, Joe served in Edmonton and completed a 6-month UN posting to the Golan Heights in 2012. He was posted to CFSME in 2013 as an instructor on his final posting.

Element	Content	Example
<b>Body – Notable Achievements or Recognition</b>	If the person has received special recognition or achieved something notable or received a significant award, a brief mention is warranted.	<p>During his time in the Golan, Joe received the Force Commander’s Commendation for his role in the rescue of a wounded Syrian shepherd who had inadvertently detonated a mine in the buffer zone. Joe administered first aid and took the man to the nearest Syrian Army checkpoint in Sasa.</p> <p>Sgt Joseph Jones received the Medal of Military Merit in 2010.</p>
<b>Body – Community Involvement</b>	Most members have played a role in their communities. If appropriate, these could be included here.	Joe was active in the scouting movement and took a number of leadership roles. As a minor hockey coach, he was named ‘Coach of the Year while serving in Trenton in 2012.
<b>Body – Future Plans</b>	This is where you can describe what the person is going to do after retiring including any training, education or employment opportunities they plan to pursue. Their family can also be mentioned at this point.	Joe has been accepted at the University of New Brunswick and will be completing a degree in Civil Engineering that he started in 2014. He, his wife Sarah and two boys, Jeremy and Clyde, will be settling in the Fredericton area.

## Annex B – Points of Style

As mentioned above, the style can be informal but not casual. The following points serve as a guide.

1. **Font:** Except for the title (Arial 18 Bold) the text will be Arial 11. Avoid any other bolding or Italics unless required.
2. **Ranks:**
  - a. Use the official rank abbreviation in the Title and any subsequent mention of the person's rank, but do spell out the rank in full in the first paragraph in the narrative.
  - b. If the person was commissioned from the ranks, simply state their rank at retirement. Do not use names that include needless detail in the name. For example, do not write Captain (former CWO) Charles Thumperhead. Simply say, Captain Charles Thumperhead. You can describe his commissioning in the narrative.
3. **Names:** If the person has a nickname or goes by a shortened form of their name, mention it in the title and use it as appropriate in the narrative. For example, Sgt Michael "Mike" Jones or MCpl Edward "Fast Eddie" Jackson. In the latter case, one would use "Ed" in the narrative rather than "Fast Eddie".
4. **Release Item:** There is no need to mention why this person is being released. It may be that they have a medical reason that we do not need made public. Similarly, there may be embarrassing and potentially damaging administrative or disciplinary reasons that are also need not be mentioned. Every member of our CME Family deserves our best wishes in their send off and not any judgement.