

Ranks and Files © 1999, Michael R. Sanders

Some discussion of the difference between a rank and a file must be accomplished so that we can begin teaching you about formations.

A rank is a formation of soldiers, standing shoulder to shoulder, facing in the same direction.



A Unit in Rank Formation

A file is a formation of soldiers, standing one behind the other, facing the same direction.



A Unit in File Formation

To make things complicated, a simple facing movement to either the right or left causes ranks to become files or files to become ranks! This certainly sounds confusing, but as you practice with your comrades you will see how it all comes together. If one of them has had any experience in the military, they will certainly make things clear for you as you work with them.

Have a Care (Fall In/Attention)

While the command is used in modern times to warn or notify others that they should pay attention, in our period the command is used to either call the unit/individual to the position of attention or to instruct the soldiers to fall into formation at the attention.

In the case of a unit that is already formed, each individual should immediately come to attention, with the left foot slightly behind the right foot, with the feet placed comfortably apart. The left hand should be placed at the waist on the left side of the body or on the pommel of the sword.

Because the VRF, for the most part, works with Yeomen squads of four, at the command the Yeomen should fall into a formation of two to a rank and two to a file, forming a square. The commander will be on the front right, his second to his left, third behind the commander and the last to his left-rear.

Face Thy Body By Thy Right/Left Hand (Right/Left Face)

The command consists of "Face thy body by thy (right or left) hand, face" and consists merely of turning 90 degrees in the correct direction.

Modern facing movements work well in this case and can be used to present a uniform movement.

In the case of a left facing movement, the individual should place their weight on the heel of the left foot and the toe of the right, then pivot on the left heel using the right foot to assist the turn. Once the turn has been completed, bring the right foot forward to the attention.

A facing movement to the right can be accomplished by reversing the weight transfer so that the weight is on the right heel and the left toe. Then pivot and complete the move by bringing the left foot forward.

Face Thy Body to the Rear By Your Right/Left Hand (About Face)

Facing to the rear by the right hand may be accomplished by using the modern military facing movement. This is done by moving the right foot so that the toe is to the left and behind the left heel. Transfer your weight to the left heel, then use your right toe to pull your body around, pivoting on the left heel. You should find that your feet will naturally fall very close to each other if this accomplished well.

Another method would be to step forward slightly with your left foot, transfer your weight to the left toe and the right heel, then pivot on both feet to the right. Once the pivot is complete, smartly bring your left foot forward to the attention.

However, there is no modern military movement for facing to the rear by turning to the left. You can reverse either of the above movements to accomplish the pivot.

General Salute

The General Salute is performed when unarmed by stepping back with the right foot, placing your weight comfortably on both feet, bowing at the waist, lightly grasping the brim of your cap with your left hand and extending your right hand behind you. If you are not the commander, your gaze should be directed just forward of your left foot. The commander will receive the command to rise/recover from those being honored (if necessary) and he will then issue the "recover" command to return you to the attention.

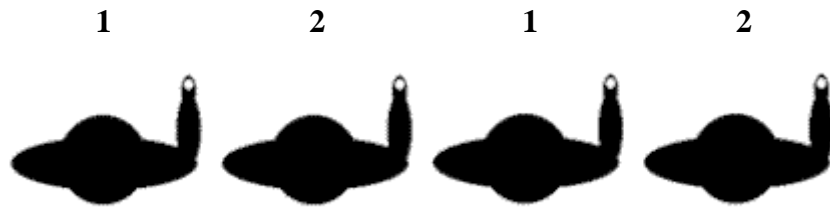
This method of salute is used primarily as a method of rendering honors to Her Majesty and/or nobility. See the chapter on "Polearm Ceremony Drill Movements" for more information about performing the General Salute while armed with a polearm.

Count Off by Twos/Threes By the Right/Left Hand (Count Off)

This command is given to assist the Yeomen in determining what individuals will move or hold fast on subsequent commands. It is almost always a precursor to doubling or tripling files/ranks (unless the members of the unit have worked together for a while.)

Upon the command, from the OPPOSITE hand (i.e. from the left side of the unit if the command is by the right hand), the individuals will count out loud in twos or threes.

For example, if the unit was formed as below, and the command was "Count Off by Twos by the Right Hand, Count", the individuals would count off as shown, starting at the leftmost Yeoman. If the command was by the Left Hand, the order would be reversed and counting off would begin with the rightmost person.



Close, Open and Very Open Order

Before we can move on to formation movement and transitions, we must discuss the close, open and very open orders.

Close order is where there is approximately 6 to 12 inches between Yeomen in the formation. Close order is normally the order that you'll find yourself in most often.

Open order is approximately arms length, or slightly more, between Yeomen.

The Very Open order can be anywhere from double arms width or wider. This has been used to place two files on opposite sides of the road, so it can be very flexible.

Open thy Order to the Open Order on the Center

Opening the Order on the Center is accomplished by performing a side step of at least shoulder width to the left or right, depending on which side of the formation you are on. If you are in a formation of three across, the center man holds position and does not move.

The command may be given to either widen the front of the unit from the Close Order, or may be given to close the order to the Open Order from the Very Open Order.

Note: This command may be given while the unit is moving/marching. To accomplish the move while marching, merely change your direction of march slightly to close or open ranks to the desired width, then resume the original direction of march.

Open thy Order to the Open Order by the Right/Left Hand

Opening the Order by the Right or Left Hand poses some problems if you're not used to working with the unit as a whole. Basically, for every file to your right/left, you will have to side step once. While the side step must be at least shoulder width, it should not be ungainly or uncomfortable.

For example, if you are in the second file from the right, on the command "Open thy Order to the Open Order by the Left Hand, March", you should take one step to your left. If you were in the third file (thus having two files to your right, on the same command you would take two side steps to the left.

Open thy Order to the Very Open Order on the Center

The Very Open Order may be attained exactly as it is done for the Open Order by simply doubling the number of side steps.

Open thy Order to the Very Open Order by the Right/Left Hand

The Very Open Order may be attained exactly as it is done for the Open Order by simply doubling the number of side steps.

Close thy Order to the Open/Close Order on the Center/Right/Left

Any close movement may be performed by doing the exact opposite movements as described for each of the Open movements.

Double thy Files by the Right/Left Hand

Doubling the Files allows a unit to transition from a single file to two files easily.

Upon the command "Double thy Files by the Right/Left Hand, March", the odd numbered men (if they were to count off from front to rear) would hold fast. The even numbered men would take one side step to the left/right, then take one step forward and dress upon the person that had not moved.

Triple thy Files by the Right/Left Hand

Upon the command "Triple thy Files by the Right/Left Hand, March", the #1 men (if they were to count off from front to rear by threes) would hold fast. The #2 men would take one side step to the left/right, then take one step forward and dress upon the person that had not moved. The #3 men would take two steps to the right/left, then two steps forward and dress.

Double thy Ranks by the Right/Left Hand

Doubling the ranks is accomplished by the even numbered Yeomen stepping back one step, then stepping Right/Left one step and then covering the man in front of them. Even numbered men stand fast.

Triple thy Ranks by the Right/Left Hand

Tripling the Ranks is accomplished by the #1 man standing fast, the #2 men stepping back one step and then stepping Right/Left one step and covering, and finally, the #3 men step back two paces and then stepping Right/Left for two paces and covering.

Throw Forward thy Right/Left Shoulder

Throwing forward a shoulder is nothing more than a 45 degree facing movement. However, it should be said that throwing forward a shoulder is confusing to some as it is a turn to the opposite of what direction is called in the command.