

**The Custody Chronicles** explores the philosophies, defines terms, reports history, offers considerations and highlights personnel related to the field of corrections, corrections training and criminal justice in general.

---

## Sally port

Day after day, and night after night you shuttle in and out of sally ports, ensuring that the facilities remain safe and that unwelcome and unsolicited persons neither come in nor get out of our secured environment. But have you thought about how the words sally port originated and why we call these safety mechanisms sally ports?

The word **sally** from the Old French *salire* (1560), means to jump or surge forward. It is a military maneuver used to attack the enemy before retreating behind one's own defenses.

The word **port** from the Latin *portus* (1570-80), means **door**. The word *postern* has been used synonymously and both words mean an underground tunnel or a secret exit or harbor for the beleaguered.

Combined around 1649 to form the noun **sally port**, these words describe the security route designed for swift passage of soldiers through fortresses. Attempting to slow offensive attacks, troops would "sally forth" through these easily secured doors and attack the enemy.

Although the building of fortresses have trickled somewhat, the modern uses of **sally ports** mirror the significance of its original benefits. Modern uses include controlling the entry and exit of highly protected and restricted areas, such as detention centers and prisons. They confine individuals who need to be searched and/or secured, as well as controlling

the flow of traffic to and from highly valuable and potentially vulnerable civilian facilities such as currency or credit card manufacturing sites.

The military use **vehicular sally ports**, which are akin to the personnel sally ports, that control the entry and exit of people to and from the secured areas and facilities mentioned earlier. However, **vehicular sally ports** are of a physical necessity with a large middle space used to control the incoming and outgoing vehicle and its personnel. The personnel mounted in the vehicle are made to stand down while the vehicle is inspected.

Think of a sally port as the elevator that has a front and back door. Of course, only one door can open at a time!

By the way, every now and then, thank the Control Officer for her/his endless patience and security ethics as you pass through the sally port on your way to and from work.

**Challenge yourself** - Can you think of any other places or spaces where sally ports are used?

References - The Word Detective  
Wikipedia  
Dictionary.com