



New Cadet & Parent Orientation Guide

Thunderbird Composite Squadron CAP(SWR-TX-179)

Thunderbird Composite Squadron Cadet Chain of Command (as of 6/15/10):

Squadron Commander:

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Welcome to the Civil Air Patrol

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) cadet program is based on the principles and core values of the US Air Force (USAF). As such, we wear the uniform of, observe the customs and courtesies of, and embrace the heritage of the USAF as a foundation for the cadet program. The curriculum is pulled directly from the Air Force training and education materials and, since 1999m is almost identical to the curriculum used by the Air Force JROTC.

The purpose of the cadet program is to teach America's youth to become dynamic leaders and prepare them to serve their community, state and nation. We accomplish this through a combination of mis-

sion oriented activities, learning experiences, and mentorship. While our program is modeled after the USAF, the CAP cadet program is not a recruiting tool. We encourage all cadets to accomplish whatever they aspire to, whether it is with the military or not.

The cadet program consists of 16 self-paced achievements that involve aerospace and leadership exams, Cadet Physical Fitness Tests (CPFT's), regular participation in the program and character development workshops. Each cadet is responsible for their own progression, and that ensures each and every promotion or award achieved by the cadet is based upon merit. Cadets will be ex-

posed to activities where they must work as a team or learn group skills, however, their advancement is an individual effort.

CAP is a volunteer organization. All of our cadets and senior (Adult) members at the local level are volunteers. As such, we are all aware of the commitment and sacrifices required to be successful in the program. For the cadets, the commitment involves parents as well. At Thunderbird, our goal is to maximize the experience for the cadets while minimizing the burden on parents.

Getting Started

There are a number of questions that prospective cadets and parents have prior to joining CAP. The purpose of this guide is to provide useful information to get new and prospective cadets started and through their first 90 days in the program.

The first step for prospective cadets is to visit the squadron during a weekly meeting. If you are reading this guide you must have already made at least one visit. We ask that prospective cadets visit at least three times before applying for membership. We also encourage par-

ents to visit so that they have an opportunity to ask questions and to see first hand what their child will be doing.

When you are visiting during these meetings, we encourage you to take part in the activities that the squadron is conducting. Watching from the sidelines is acceptable, but the only way you will get a true feel for what cadet life is like is to participate.

As you will quickly learn, there are numerous opportunities ahead of you in the Civil Air Patrol. You will learn and do

things you may only have dreamt of before joining. While the opportunities are great, your individual responsibilities will be as well.

Is this something you and your parents believe, after three visits, you will be able to dedicate yourself to: work hard at, participate actively in, study diligently for, and take personal responsibility for your own development in? If so, submit your application at or after your third meeting.- we have a place for you within Thunderbird Composite Squadron and CAP.

CAP's Core Values:

Integrity
Volunteer Service
Excellence
Respect

Serve as a cornerstone of the program and guide the actions of our members at all times.

Organization of Civil Air Patrol



The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is a not for profit organization congressionally chartered with three main missions: Aerospace Education, Emergency Services, and the Cadet Program. CAP is the official Auxiliary of the United States Air Force and first began carrying out our missions for America in 1941.

As an organization, CAP is first divided into Regions. There are 8 Regions across the United States. Texas is part of the Southwest Region which includes Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

CAP is next divided between 52 Wings– there is one Wing for each state plus the National Capital and Puerto Rico. The

Thunderbird Composite Squadron is a proud part of Texas Wing.

From the Wing level, in states with large populations, the next organizational level in CAP is the Group. Thunderbird Composite Squadron is part of Group IV of Texas Wing which covers the greater Houston area.

The next operational level in CAP is the Squadron. This is the level where cadets participate the most frequently. Squadrons can be one of three types– Cadet Squadrons, Senior (adult) Squadrons, or Composite Squadrons. Thunderbird is a Composite Squadron, meaning there is equal emphasis placed on both adult and cadet mem-

bership and development.

Cadets are organized into a Flight within each Squadron. Cadets who first join will start out in Bravo or BCT (Basic Cadet Training) Flight. Your job in Bravo Flight will be to learn the basics of being a cadet in CAP. You will learn history, basic drill movements, customs and courtesies, and basic knowledge. Your only focus will be upon learning everything you can to obtain your first achievement.

You will not be able to participate in many of the “cool” activities that other cadets do until you move on to Alpha flight, so pay close attention to your cadet staff and study hard for that first achievement test!

When and where do we meet?

Thunderbird meets weekly on **Tuesday nights**. During the school year we meet from **7pm-9pm**. During the summer months we expand our meetings to **6:30pm-9:00pm**. The change to summer hours will be announced in advance. There are also various weekend activities.

Unless otherwise noted, we always meet at the hangar under the beacon on the east side of West Houston Airport (see back page).

Each meeting focuses on a different topic essential to CAP and/ or the Cadet Program. The uniform of the day varies from meeting to meeting as well as for the specific agenda. A standard schedule can be found below, but remember– always check with your cadet chain of command if you have questions about the schedule.

Squadron Meeting Schedule

Day	Activity– 1st 1/2	Activity– 2nd 1/2	Uniform	Highlights
1st Tuesday	Alpha Flight– Aerospace Bravo Flight– BCT	Achievement Testing & Flight Sgt’s Time	Blues	
2nd Tuesday	Alpha Flight– Emergency Svcs Bravo Flight– BCT	Flight Commander’s Time/ Drill	BDU’s	Promotion reviews if needed
3rd Tuesday	Alpha Flight– Leadership Bravo Flight– BCT	ALL: Character Development	Blues	Promotion and awards cere- mony at closing formation.
4th Tuesday	ALL: Cadet PFT	ALL: Physical Training	PT Gear	Sign up for testing Parents meet w/ Deputy Com-
5th Tuesday (rare)	Open House, Parents Night or a Fun Activity		As announced	Will be announced ahead of time.

Uniforms

All cadets are required to wear a **complete and proper** uniform when participating in a CAP activity. You are accountable for your appearance from the moment you obtain your membership number.

Minimum Requirement

The minimum uniform required for all cadets to participate (who do not yet have uniforms) is a **plain white t shirt** tucked into jeans with a belt. Cadets are encouraged to purchase a squadron t shirt from the supply officer for \$12 which can be worn in place of the plain white one. Cadets will not be allowed to wear inappropriate items and may be sent home or required to turn an article of clothing inside out to participate.

Blues

Cadets are eligible to receive one free blues uniform from the US Air Force, subject to the availability of grant funding. Cadets should turn in their completed sizing form (which was included with their application) to the Supply Officer as soon as they can. You may need to have your parents measure you, or go to a tailor to be measured for this step. The order usually

takes 4-6 weeks to process.

For their blues, cadets will need to purchase their nameplate, hat and collar insignia. These items are available through the Supply Officer and cost approximately \$15. Cadets will also need plain black leather or patent leather dress shoes.

In the event that grant funding is unavailable, cadets will be responsible for obtaining their own set of blues. The squadron does maintain a small supply of uniform items and may be able to provide a uniform to cadets in need. See the Supply Officer for options.

*****All uniforms provided by the squadron, or through the USAF grant program, remain property of the squadron and must be returned if a cadet separates from CAP*****

Field Uniform

Cadets are responsible for obtaining a camouflage field uniform (commonly referred to as BDUs). This consists of a hat, jacket, pants, brown t shirt (Black T shirts are to be worn by squadron staff ONLY), blue web belt and black combat boots. A full set of new BDUs will usually cost around \$120 with all

patches. BDU's can be purchased online or at local army/navy surplus stores. Used items can also be found at these stores for far less (but make sure used items are not ripped, torn, overly faded, etc. first!). As with the blues, the squadron does maintain a small supply of BDUs and may be able to provide a uniform to cadets in need.

Physical Training (PT) Uniform

During PT nights and certain other activities, cadets will wear the PT uniform. This consists of a squadron (or plain white) t shirt, blue or black shorts/ track pants, and athletic shoes.

Inspections

Cadets should be aware that they are subject to uniform inspections at any time during a CAP activity. As such, it is imperative that your uniform is worn correctly and that you always represent CAP and the United States Air Force in the best light.

If you have questions regarding your uniform, see your Flight Sergeant. You can also consult your cadet materials or the CAP website. The Supply Officer is also a great resource to you.



The uniform mini posters included in your new cadet welcome package are great resources!

Earning your first stripe (and ribbon!)

Cadets all start out as Cadet Airman Basics and have no stripes.

The Curry Achievement is the **first step in your CAP career**. Once you have obtained your first stripe (C/Airman) you are able to participate in much more of the cadet program.

If ready, you are eligible to test for your Curry Achievement as early as the first testing night following activation of your

membership.

You must pass a leadership test based upon Leadership Chapter 1 (provided in your welcome packet). You will also be tested on your abilities to perform basic drill and ceremonies following the leadership test.

You must also have participated actively in CAP, have attended a recent character development class (see schedule), and recently passed a Cadet Physical

Fitness Test (CPFT). You may be required to go before a promotion board of review where your overall performance in CAP will be discussed prior to determining your promotion status.

Taking the time to study and know the material before you test will make your time in the cadet program far more gratifying.

Hint- Memorize the cadet oath!



Internet Resources

Most prospective cadets are very “web savvy” these days, but there may be some of you (parents maybe?) out there who require a little assistance from time to time. The fact of the matter is that there is large amount of information about CAP available on the internet. Sometimes, there may even be too much information for the person trying to quickly look up an answer to a specific question. We have included links to some of our favorite CAP related sites for you below:

<http://tx179.org/> The official site of the Thunderbird Composite Squadron. Contains squadron calendar, pictures, info, etc.

<http://www.twgcap.org/> The official site of Texas Wing CAP

<http://texascadet.org/> A site with information just for you: the TX Wing CAP cadet.

<http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/> This is the members section of the CAP national website and houses a vast amount of information. You will need to know this site as many below are linked to from here.

http://www.capmembers.com/cadet_programs/new_cadet_help/ You are a new cadet. You need help. Where should you go? Try the “New Cadet Help” section of the Cadet Programs page on the CAP site.

http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/cadet_programs/parents/ Parents, you were not forgotten. This one's for you!

<http://www.vanguardmil.com/> This is the official online vendor for CAP uniforms and accessories. We suggest checking with the supply officer for your needs before ordering direct from Vanguard for two reasons: 1- the item may already be in stock at the Squadron. 2- If it must be ordered, it can be combined with other orders to keep the shipping costs to a minimum.

<https://www.capnhq.gov/CAP.eServices.Web/Default.aspx> CAP eServices. You can link to this site from the CAP members area. This is the application that maintains all member info in CAP. Once you become a member you will need to access this site and take your Operational Security Training (OPSEC) course. You can also change/ view your personal info and access other online training through here.

<http://www.cadetstuff.org/> an unofficial blog about cadet life in CAP.

Tech Tips

Please remember that rules of etiquette as well as customs and courtesies still apply when emailing. If emailing a cadet or senior member for CAP business, you are expected to show them the proper courtesies (addressing by rank/ name, using Sir or Ma'am, etc.) that you would when speaking with them face to face.

You should always return or acknowledge an email sent from your chain of command regarding CAP business.

Always be careful with social media such as My Space, Facebook, Twitter, etc. for your safety as well as the health of your CAP career. You always want yourself and your organization to be reflected in the best light

Email groups and distribution lists

Let's face it- life moves fast these days. The missions of CAP often require quick and widespread information distribution. To accommodate this, many units and groups within CAP have established Yahoo Groups or other methods of passing along information via email. While we always try to pass along pertinent information during opening or closing formations, sometimes there is so much info that we cannot possibly cover it all. We HIGHLY SUGGEST that all cadets (and interested parents) join the following groups so that they receive the most up to date information possible:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TX-179_thunderbirdsquadron/ Squadron related information as well as other topics.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/texascadet/> A group that will tell you when changes have been made to Texascadet.org

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/texaswingcap/> Information regarding CAP activities and opportunities across Texas.

Most of these groups are moderated, meaning that you will need to go to the site and request to join before you begin receiving any messages. The small time investment to sign up for these groups will go a long way toward keeping yourself “in the know” of the latest developments in CAP within our area.

The Three Missions

Cadet Programs

This is what you are here for, right? Within the cadet program you will have numerous opportunities to learn, to lead, and to experience. If you put forth the effort and dedication, the sky is the limit for you. Nobody will hand you promotions on a silver platter but with each one you earn, you will learn so much more about yourself and your potential. These are skills that will stick with you the rest of your life.

Interested in a career in the military or attending one of the service academies? There is no better program to prepare you

for these challenges. Cadets who obtain the highest achievements in the cadet program are looked at very favorably in the selection process.

Do you want to experience some of the most unique summer experiences available to youth in America? Work towards being eligible to attend a National Cadet Special Activity (NCSA). Opportunities from Civil Engineering, to Leadership, to working with Air Force Special Operations Forces and everything in between await for those who have earned it.

In addition to progression within the cadet program, a critical key to opening the door to most of the awesome opportunities within CAP lies in attending your first encampment. These are held over summer and winter breaks and are a sort of cadet "boot camp". Lasting 7-10 days, encampments are intense but fun. The prices vary from year to year and place to place (you are not limited to TX!), but usually range between \$150-\$250. We strongly encourage new cadets to attend their first encampment as quickly as possible. Fund raising or scholarship opportunities may be available.



Life as a CAP cadet is fun as well as educational.

Aerospace Education

CAP strives to foster a love of aviation and aviation related topics throughout America. One of the ways that we do this is through our Orientation Flight (O Flight) program. Cadets are eligible for multiple O Flights in both gliders and powered aircraft throughout their career. This a great opportunity for cadets to get familiar with aircraft both on the ground and in the air.

Through our model rocketry program, cadets have an opportunity to learn about the history of rocketry and the dynamics of rocket flight. They then build their own model rockets and put the theories they learn into reality on launch day.

Cadets who work diligently and meet certain requirements will be eligible to attend Glider Flight Academies or Powered Flight Academies (see NCSA's

above) where they may have an opportunity to earn their wings as a pilot.

All cadets are required to study Aerospace related materials and will be required to regularly test their knowledge at nearly every milestone, promotion and achievement.

Thunderbird cadets also regularly participate in area air shows.



The sky is truly the limit in the CAP cadet program

Emergency Services

CAP performs around 90% of all inland Search and Rescue missions in the United States as assigned by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. In 2009 CAP was credited with saving the lives of 72 individuals. CAP also performs a host of disaster and humanitarian relief missions across the country.

CAP cadets (who have received required training and education) are eligible to participate in both training and real world emergency services missions along side their senior (adult) counterparts. They may work in the mission base as communicators or assist in critical staff functions. They may work the flight line to ensure our aircraft move safely from one point to another while on the ground. Adventurous cadets can even participate on Ground or Urban Direction Finding teams to search for mission persons or aircraft. The opportunities are great but the responsibilities are as well.

Cadets just starting out in CAP must first concentrate on obtaining their first achievement and learning the basics of the program before they are eligible to begin training for an Emergency Services specialty. If this is something that interests you, continue to study hard and earn that first stripe. When the time is right, you can speak with your Flight Sergeant or the Emergency Services Officer to learn how you can begin your training in this exciting area.



Cadets practice radio direction finding skills used to find an Emergency Locator Transmitter.



The Cadet Oath

"I pledge that I will serve faithfully in the Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program and that I will attend meetings regularly, participate actively in unit activities, obey my officers, wear my uniform properly, and advance my education and training rapidly to prepare myself to be of service to my community, state, and nation."

These are simple but powerful words that every cadet first agrees to when they sign their name on the application. When you join CAP, you become part of something much larger than just you. In order to remain a member in good standing, you must remain true to this oath. The first official act that you performed for CAP was to agree to this pledge.

The elements within this oath outline what it takes for a cadet to be successful in CAP: Regularly attend meetings, participate actively, obey your chain of command, wear your uniform properly and strive to learn everything you can about CAP and to advance. If you always keep the cadet oath in the back of your mind and let it guide the decisions that you make, you will never go wrong.

Do not take this oath lightly. Remember, you are making a promise to CAP, to yourself, and to your loved ones when you agree to it. At a minimum, you will be reminded of this as you recite the cadet oath during each promotion you achieve.

Why do I have to do all of this marching and drill?

"Through drill, leaders learn about the building blocks of leadership in the cadet program"

- CAP Cadet Drill Guide

Drill is far more than just an orderly way of moving a group of people from point A to point B. CAP cadets learn drill for the same reasons that soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines do. Drill is a time tested laboratory for developing leadership skill.

Through drill, cadets stand taller and develop a sense of pride about themselves which translates into success in other areas of their lives. They begin to appreciate attention to detail and see how small things make a big difference. They build self discipline when standing at the perfect position of attention, silently focusing on a single point on the horizon. Cadets gain self confidence when given opportunities to lead a formation. They begin to carry themselves with that special quality called military

bearing and people in every day life begin to see them differently, setting them apart from ordinary youth. Drill builds the team and instills a sense of pride on the part of the cadets as they come together as a cohesive unit and execute commands with precision. The group succeeds when each of its members perform as a team.

Drill will take up a lot of your time as you first start out in CAP simply because it is so very important to your development as a successful cadet and future leader. You may become discouraged when more senior cadets go off to attend classes on emergency services or aerospace topics while you are left with your group to drill. You always have to

remember that, especially as you start out in the program, your main focus must be on building a solid foundation upon which to build your CAP cadet career on. Drill is a vitally important aspect of that foundation, so practice, practice, practice.

Put in effort when drilling during squadron meetings and then practice more at home. The quicker you learn the basic movements, the quicker you will be ready to test for your first achievement and move on to "bigger and better" things in CAP. For those that truly enjoy drill, you may want to ask your flight sergeant about opportunities in the color or honor guard teams.

Customs and Courtesies



In addition to drill and ceremonies, practicing military customs and courtesies serves to keep us firmly grounded and aligned with the USAF. All cadets should refer to CAP Pamphlet 151 "Respect on Display" as well as work with others in their chain of command to gain a solid understanding of customs and courtesies. Forgetting to render proper customs and courtesies can make for an uncomfortable situation!

When we render military customs and courtesies, the core value of Respect is on display. Traditions such as the salute, rendering a proper greeting, and referring to those senior to us as Ma'am or Sir are expected of all CAP members during CAP activities, especially when in uniform. Practicing these courtesies shows that respect is a two way street and is in no way meant to be demeaning. This is yet another tool in developing leaders through discipline and character development.

Info for Parents

Safety First

In the event of an emergency involving a cadet, CAP officers will contact their parents by phone to advise them of the situation. Please ensure that your cadet's emergency contact info is always up to date in the eServices application (see page 4). Parents will be asked to pick up their cadet for non emergency incidents such as illness (non-critical such as fever, vomiting, chronic symptoms, etc), fainting (not including extended unconsciousness), minor injuries requiring first aid or medical attention (cuts bigger than a band aid), or allergic reactions. In an emergency, CAP officers will call 911 first, and notify parents after. Regardless of the level of training of any CAP officer in attendance, CAP will only administer first aid.

CAP has an exceptional safety record, and our goal is to prevent these kinds of incidents from ever happening. Our contingency for unavoidable accidents is preparation and rapid response. Our goal in the cadet program is to return all cadets home safe after every activity. Our cadet programs officers are the last to leave from every meeting and activity where cadets are present.

All senior (adult) CAP members have their backgrounds federally screened and are required to take training on CAP's Cadet Protection Program before interacting with cadets.

Attendance

There is no specific rule in CAP for attendance, however, cadets are required to "attend meetings regularly". We understand that our cadets live busy and full lives, and we expect them to put school first. With that said, in Thunderbird we expect that cadets attend at least 50% of all meetings and activities.

Excused absences must be approved in advance where reasonable, and will not be counted against the cadet once approved. To have an absence approved, cadets must contact their Flight Sergeant, Flight Commander or the Cadet Commander. Excessive absences, excusable absences not granted prior approval, and "selective attendance" will be considered grounds for suspended promotions, exclusion from activities, and, in extreme cases, removal from the program.

The "Cadet Super Chart" is a great resource regarding cadet promotions. You can find it online at the CAP national website.

Who do I contact?

If you have questions regarding your cadet, you should feel free to contact the Deputy Commander for Cadets or the Leadership Officer for the squadron. These individuals are dedicated to administering the cadet program.

The Deputy Commander for Cadets has set aside the first 30 minutes of the 4th meeting each month specifically to meet with parents. This is an excellent opportunity to ask questions and check in on the progress of your cadet. We encourage you to use this time to your best advantage.

The image shows a screenshot of the 'CADET SUPER CHART' on the CAP National Website. The chart is a large, multi-column table with a header row for 'CIVIL AIR PATROL' and 'CADET SUPER CHART'. It contains numerous columns of data, including names, ranks, and other details for cadets across different squadrons. The chart is organized into sections, likely representing different squadrons or units.

Partnership

Your cadet will be far more successful in CAP if you remain active as well. Keep in touch with the cadet program staff and ask questions when you have them. Encourage your cadets to source solutions to their own questions and to utilize their chain of command. This booklet is a great resource but is truly only a starting point as to where to go for information.

Remind your cadets that they are solely responsible for their progression and success within the program. While they may be eligible to progress every 60 days, it is completely dependent upon their drive and desire to study, participate actively, and communicate effectively. For every promotion they will need to pass a leadership test, an aerospace test (usually), attend a character development class, pass a physical fitness test, and have actively participated in the program. If they are not progressing as fast as you feel they should be, you should first ask them if they have completed these requirements.

While we do not wish to meddle in the personal or family affairs of our cadets, if you know that your child is experiencing a significant life challenge, such as the passing of a relative, it is helpful for you to let us know that information. This knowledge will help us understand the behavior of the cadets and will guide us in how we deal with them. Similarly, if your child has learning disabilities or trouble with a particular aspect of learning (such as dyslexia), please let us know so that we may do our best to accommodate any special needs.

Strong and successful partnerships between parents and the cadet programs staff are key to the success of your child in CAP!



Thunderbird Composite Squadron CAP(SWR-TX-179)

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www.tx179.org

The next stop is the top!

West Houston Airport



CAP Top 10's

What CAP Expects of Cadets:

- 1: Put school First
- 2: Maintain Integrity
- 3: Speak Freely
- 4: Set High Standards
- 5: Lead By Example
- 6: Act Responsibly
- 7: Stay Positive
- 8: Keep Learning
- 9: Help Junior Cadets Grow
- 10: Have Fun!

Ways to get more out of CAP:

- 1: Attend Encampment
- 2: Recruit a Friend
- 3: Apply For a Scholarship
- 4: Attend a National Activity
- 5: Involve Your Parents
- 6: Participate in Local Activities
- 7: Serve Your Community
- 8: Make Friends
- 9: Earn Promotions
- 10: Listen to Leaders