PARENTS' GUIDE to the

CIVIL AIR PATROL CADET PROGRAM

May 2025

LEADERSHIP
AEROSPACE
FITNESS
CHARACTER





Cadets take a selfie with two Air Force Thunderbird pilots, who are themselves former CAP cadets.

THANK YOU for supporting your son's or daughter's membership in the Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Program.

Through their experiences as CAP cadets, young people develop into responsible citizens and become tomorrow's aero-space leaders.

CAP is the volunteer, nonprofit auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force. Its three programs develop cadets, educate Americans on the importance of aviation and space, and perform life-saving, humanitarian missions.

CORE VALUES

- INTEGRITY
- VOLUNTEER SERVICE
- EXCELLENCE
- RESPECT

KEY TRAITS *of* CADET LIFE

- THE UNIFORM
- AEROSPACE THEME
- OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD
- CHALLENGE
- FUN



ange County Register

Civil Air Patrol appeals to young people who set high standards and want to do something big.

A GREAT FIRST YEAR

Here's the recipe for an awesome first year.

- ❑ Attend weekly meetings regularly and strive to promote.
- ❑ Attend one weekend activity each month, if available.
- ❑ Participate in an orientation flight.
- ❑ Attend the week-long encampment.
- ❑ Recruit a friend and make new friends, too.
- ❑ Commit to at least one year as an active cadet and allow the CAP experience the opportunity to shape and enrich your life.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

We help cadets become aerospace leaders, which includes their developing:

- ♦ A commitment to a personal code of honor
- ♦ Leadership skills for a diverse, democratic society
- ♦ Enthusiasm for and knowledge about STEM, aviation, or service-related careers
- ♦ A habit of regular exercise

OVERVIEW *of the* CADET PROGRAM

To fulfill its goal of developing young people into responsible citizens and aerospace leaders, the Cadet Program is organized around four program elements.

As cadets participate in these four elements, they advance through a series of achievements, earning honors and increased responsibilities along the way.

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/ranks



Cadets learn that leadership isn't about raw power but the capacity to serve others.

LEADERSHIP

CAP introduces cadets to Air Force perspectives on leadership through classroom instruction, mentoring and hands-on learning. First, cadets learn to follow, but as they progress, they learn how to lead small teams, manage projects, think independently and develop leadership skills they can use in adult life.



Where's the best place to study aerospace? The cockpit.

AEROSPACE & STEM

CAP inspires in youth a love of aviation, space and technology. Cadets study the fundamentals of aerospace science in the classroom, and experience flight first-hand in CAP aircraft. Training in cyber defense is a new frontier. At summer activities, cadets explore STEM careers.

HOW CADETS ADVANCE

LEADERSHIP *Tasks*

- Cadet Interactive or written test
- Drill & Ceremonies Performance Test
- Fulfill the Leadership Expectations shown on the Cadet Super Chart

AEROSPACE *Tasks*

- Cadet Interactive or written test

Aerospace requirements begin with Achievement 2

FITNESS *Tasks*

- Participate in 1 fitness activity

Beginning with the Wright Brothers Award, cadets become accountable for their performance on the Cadet Physical Fitness Test

CHARACTER *Tasks*

- Participate in 1 character forum



ROUTINE *Tasks*

- Maintain your membership
- Participate actively in unit activities
- Wear the uniform properly (after Achievement 1)
- Recite the Cadet Oath from memory
- Amass at least 56 days time in grade
- Receive your unit commander's endorsement

This is a simplified list; for full details see
▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/ranks



Being a cadet means getting yourself into shape and growing stronger.

FITNESS

CAP encourages cadets to develop a lifelong habit of regular exercise. The Cadet Program promotes fitness through calisthenics, hiking, rappelling, volleyball, competitions and other activities.



CHARACTER

CAP challenges cadets to live their Core Values. Through character forums, cadets discuss ethical issues relevant to teens. Chaplains often lead the discussions, but the forums are not religious meetings. CAP also encourages cadets to promote a drug free ethic in their schools and communities.

CADET MEMBERSHIP



Cadets make friends with other teens who share their values and goals.

ANNUAL DUES

Cadets' annual dues vary by location. Additionally, cadets may be charged fees to cover meal and lodging costs at special activities.

UNIFORM VOUCHERS

Curry Uniform Vouchers are issued one time only and **expire 45 days** after issuing. Vouchers **cannot be reissued.** If you don't use it in the time allotted you will lose it.

CADET WELCOME KIT

Within 3 weeks of joining CAP, cadets receive a Welcome Kit in the mail. It includes the *New Cadet Guide,* leadership and aerospace textbooks, and other tools to help cadets get started in CAP.

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/newcadet

UNIFORMS

The Air Force-style uniform is a symbol of the Core Values, inspiring cadets to think of themselves as young leaders.

Casual Uniform. During their first weeks of membership, cadets might wear a casual uniform like a squadron t-shirt. They're allowed to complete Achievement 1 in this status.

Uniform Requirement. Cadets are expected to be in a proper Blues or ABU (camouflage) uniform 60 days after completing Achievement 1. Eventually cadets may acquire both uniforms.

Cost. Each type of uniform, Blues and ABUs, costs about $200-$300 each.

Supply Locker. Your squadron may be able to provide some items for free.

Financial Assistance. Upon completing Achievement 1, cadets receive via email the *Curry Uniform Voucher* to assist in purchasing Blues and/or ABUs. The voucher's value is based on the financial need you declared when you registered your cadet for CAP.

Supplier. Our official uniform partner is Vanguard, *VanguardMil.com.* Other sources for uniforms may be available in your area; talk with local leaders.

Turning-In Uniforms. When your cadet outgrows a uniform or leaves CAP, please turn-in the items so that other cadets might use them.

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/newcadet

BASIC EXPECTATIONS OF CADETS

LIVING THE CADET CORE VALUES

1. **Treat everyone with courtesy and respect**—every person deserves to feel valued and included.

2. **Be honest and own your actions**—integrity is the foundation of leadership.

3. **Wear your uniform with pride and professionalism**—you represent something greater than yourself.

4. **Follow the instructions of your officers and respect rules**—these guidelines help keep everyone safe and successful.

5. **Use the chain of command to share questions, ideas, or concerns**—your voice matters.

6. **Go to any adult leader (Senior), regardless of the chain of command, if you need to report bullying or abuse**—your safety and well-being come first.

7. **Use the Air Force command, "Knock it off," to stop unsafe behavior immediately**—everyone has the power to prevent harm.

BUILD A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

1. **Choose respectful, inclusive language**—speak in a way that uplifts everyone.

2. **Promote a safe and supportive space**—resolve conflicts peacefully and stand against bullying or threats.

3. **Respect others' property and equipment**—use all items responsibly and return them in good condition.

4. **Respect personal boundaries**—physical contact should always be appropriate and professional.

5. **Keep activities substance-free**—show up clear-headed, ready to learn, lead, and grow.

6. **Use digital tools responsibly**—never share or request inappropriate images or messages. If unsure, ask an adult.

7. **Leave weapons at home**—help create a secure environment for everyone.



Cadet behavior often changes for the positive. Even the youngest cadets find the inspiration to think of themselves as capable leaders.

OUR PHILOSOPHY FOR DEVELOPING YOUTH

Cadet life is a young person's opportunity to flourish. When a cadet puts on their uniform, they see themself differently and begin to ask, Who am I? What do I stand for? To be a cadet is to take your personal growth seriously.

GOOD HABITS

Accordingly, CAP instills self-discipline, understood as the habit of following a set of Core Values to achieve goals that better yourself and the community. We hope those goals will involve aerospace careers, but if not, we're pleased if we've helped form responsible citizens.

STATUS AS YOUNG ADULTS

The cadets' seriousness of purpose distinguishes them as ***mature, responsible young people, not children.*** While we remain committed to ongoing dialogue with parents, we want to see cadets – not parents – prepare their own uniforms, follow-through on commitments they make, and use the cadet chain of command to resolve their questions and concerns.

RESILIENCE

CAP is a safe place to learn. Challenge is a key aspect of cadet life, so we support cadets as they try new experiences, knowing that they may not succeed fully at first. We believe that affording cadets freedom to make mistakes builds resilience. We ask parents to give their cadet the space they need to grow.



When cadets promote, their self-confidence grows.

HOMESICKNESS

Cadets may feel homesick during their first overnight activity. Local leaders are prepared to mentor cadets through the experience. We find it helpful if parents express confidence in the cadet's ability to succeed, and not hedge with promises of an early pickup or frequent texts and phone calls.

FAMILY & SCHOOL

Family and school obligations take priority over CAP. Cadets are required to maintain "satisfactory progress" in school, as determined by their parents. School and cadet programs complement each other to support growth in academics, responsibility, and leadership.

SAFETY & ADULT SUPERVISION

CAP is a safe, positive environment that uses an age-appropriate, military-style learning model to challenge young people. While cadet life is regimented, we do not tolerate any form of abusive behavior or hazing. Here are some ways we keep youth safe:

- Every CAP adult leader has been fingerprinted and passed a criminal background check.
- Every CAP adult leader has been trained in how to mentor youth in a positive way.
- Every CAP activity (with a few, rare exceptions) will be supervised by at least two CAP adult leaders.
- We structure our activities so that opportunities for isolated, one-on-one contact with cadets are minimized.
- Your local squadron will announce cadet activities via a web calendar, so you can know what events are upcoming.
- You'll be given written information each time a special activity is held, and be asked to sign a permission slip.
- If an adult leader is transporting a cadet, at least one other person will be in the vehicle.
- While older, experienced cadets act as servant-leaders over younger, new-comer cadets, they always do so under adult supervision.
- Each cadet has a "wingman" for peer-to-peer support and safety.
- We teach cadets to look out for their wingman's safety and we tell cadets that if they think inappropriate behavior is occurring, they are to tell any trusted adult, without fear of retaliation.

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/cadetprotection

REPORTING CONCERNS

Parents and members should report concerns by using the ***Report a Concern*** link at the very bottom of ***GoCivilAirPatrol.com*** or by emailing: cadetprotection@capnhq.gov.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If your cadet has a disability or other special need, please share that with the local leaders. We are committed to doing everything we reasonably can to help each cadet succeed. We're especially proud of cadets who work hard and lead by example despite their having a learning or physical disability. There's no reason to hide your cadet's special needs. **For more ▶** GoCivilAirPatrol.com/specialneeds



CADET FLIGHT PLAN *for* AVIATION CAREERS



1st CADET YEAR*

1. Enter the CAP Cadet Program between ages 12 and 18.

2. Learn aerospace basics at weekly squadron meetings. Ask which STEM kits are available.

3. Take the controls during your first orientation flight. O-flights are always free to cadets.

4. Read the cadet aerospace and leadership texts. Complete the Cadet Interactive modules and promote. Try to earn the Wright Brothers Award by the end of your first cadet year.

5. Go to encampment and interact with the Air Force. Apply for Cadet Encampment Assistance Program (CEAP) funds to get help with tuition and uniforms, if needed.

2nd CADET YEAR

6. Attend a National Flight Academy and and receive up to 10 hours of flight instruction from a Certified Flight Instructor. Apply for the Take-Off Program to get help with expenses, if needed.

7. Explore an aviation or STEM career at a National Cadet Special Activity. Apply for Cadet Lift to get help with expenses, if needed. Try to earn the Mitchell Award by the end of your second cadet year.



"We're licensed pilots now, thanks, CAP!"





3rd CADET YEAR & BEYOND

8. Compete for the elite Cadet Wings program, which covers nearly all expenses leading to a Private Pilot license. Selection is competitive and based on specific eligibility requirements.

9. Compete for ROTC and Service Academy appointments. Apply for CAP scholarships. Check out the University Aviation Association, uaa.aero, for help in your college search. Or, enlist in the USAF at the grade of Airman First Class.

10. Enter the aviation profession and give back to tomorrow's cadets.

★ The flight plan is for illustration purposes. Each cadet experience may be different. Additionally, by law the minimum age for solo flight in a powered aircraft is 16.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: CadetInvest

CadetInvest connects cadets, their aspirations, and funding partners. Financial assistance empowers cadets to pursue their goals. Some CadetInvest opportunities include:

CADET ENCAMPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CEAP)

For cadets in their first year or beyond, "Seep" helps disadvantaged cadets attend an encampment by assisting with tuition and uniform costs.

CADET LIFT

For cadets in their second year or beyond, "Lift" helps cadets with tuition and travel costs for a one-week career exploration academy.

TAKE-OFF PROGRAM

For cadets in their second year or beyond, "Top" helps cadets attend a one-week CAP flight academy, which could be the first step towards a private pilot certificate.

CADET WINGS

For cadets in their second year or beyond, "Wings" is an ultra-competitive, merit-based program that covers nearly all expenses to transform them into licensed private pilots.

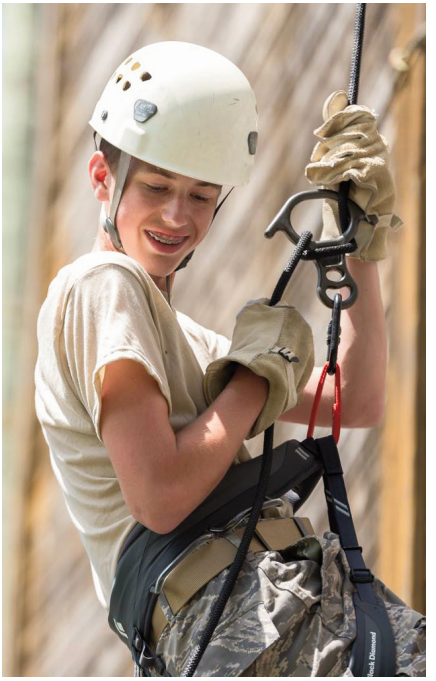
For details please visit
GoCivilAirPatrol.com/CadetInvest

ENCAMPMENT

The highlight of a cadet's first year is the encampment, a week-long, highly-regimented immersion into all aspects of cadet life. Cadets develop leadership skills, explore STEM and military careers, challenge themselves on obstacle courses, and have a lot of fun. Encampment is often required for NCSAs and other advanced programs

We want every cadet to attend, so please mark your calendar now (visit the link below). Tuition averages $200 to $400. Financial aid is available through CEAP (see page 10).

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/encampment



(Right) Teenaged cadets bravely face new challenges, and learn how to take risks safely and responsibly.



Seeing military aircraft up close makes encampment unlike any other youth activity.

FLYING

Many cadets receive their first flight in an airplane, thanks to CAP.



CAP's volunteer pilots share their love of flying with cadets. Through orientation flights in powered aircraft and gliders, cadets experience flight first-hand.

While aloft, cadets handle the controls during the noncritical stages of the flight. CAP's pilots are licensed by the FAA, follow a syllabus for each flight, and ensure the flight is conducted safely.

Cadets may also receive orientation flights in military aircraft. Orientation flights are free to cadets.

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/cadetflying

THE FUTURE

To help cadets plan for an exciting future, CAP offers college and flight scholarships.

And, while they are not obligated to join the military, for cadets who do enlist in the Air Force, earning the Mitchell Award awards you an advanced pay grade (E-3).

The service academies and ROTC also look favorably on CAP experience. About 10% of Air Force Academy cadets are former CAP cadets, and the Academy's Preparatory School sets aside at least one slot for CAP cadets annually.

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/CadetInvest



Cadets develop self-discipline that translates into academic success. 85% earn B's or better at school.

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Parents are welcome to observe all CAP activities. There are no secret meetings.

ADDRESSING CONCERNS

As a parent, any time you have a question or concern, please contact the local squadron commander. CAP takes parents' concerns very seriously.

If local leaders are unable to resolve an issue to your satisfaction, your wing (state) leaders will gladly help.

ADULT MEMBERSHIP

CAP can always use more adult volunteers. If you are willing to serve occasionally as a chaperone or driver, consider joining as a ***Cadet Sponsor Member.*** If you are interested in participating more fully in CAP's missions, consider joining as a ***Senior Member.***

PARENTS' COMMITTEE

Parents can support the cadets in their local squadron without officially joining CAP by serving on a parents' committee. Some ways parents can help include:

- asking area businesses to make financial or in-kind donations
- organizing a carpool system
- planning an awards night or pot luck dinner
- helping the squadron connect with local civic groups
- serving as a guest speaker
- spreading the news about CAP and helping recruit new members.

For more ▶ GoCivilAirPatrol.com/parents



CAP is a great activity for the whole family. Many cadets have recruited their parents, with Mom or Dad continuing to volunteer long after the kids have grown.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The CAP Cadet Program outperforms the average youth-serving organization in delivering positive developmental outcomes.*

Positive Youth Development Outcomes	CAP score vs. average program
"I learned about the challenges of being a leader"	124%
"I think about who I am and my future"	121%
"I learned how to control my temper and manage stress"	133%
"I made friends and learned about helping others"	115%

Cadet Academic Performance

56% Straight A students

85% Earn As & Bs

Cadets' Career Interests

81% military service

76% aviation

65% STEM: science, technology, engineering, math

Your gift will make the world better, kinder, brighter.

Every dollar you give will assist our work in transforming today's cadets into tomorrow's aerospace leaders. CAP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Gifts may be tax deductible. GoCivilAirPatrol.com/Giving



* In 2021, CAP conducted a 360º outcomes evaluation using the *Youth Experiences Survey 2.0* (Hansen & Larson, 2005). CAP's performance on YES 2.0 is benchmarked against youth-serving organizations reported by *Personality & Individual Differences, 54* (2013), and the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 42* (2016). Cadet academic performance was validated by a survey of cadets' parents in 2022.

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TO THE PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF