

Starting a New School Program Unit



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NEW UNIT CHECKLIST

Item Description	OPR	Timeline
Assignment of CAP Member as liaison to school	Host Squadron Commander	
Hold an initial interest meeting with faculty and school leadership	Host Squadron Commander	
Secure formal/informal school support	Liaison	
Approval from appropriate superintendent/principal/school board	School Leadership	
Initial presentation/agreement of draft School Program MOU	Use School Group Commander as a resource	
Identification of lead faculty sponsor (unit commander):	Liaison/School Leadership	
Identification of additional faculty to support the program (do not need separate leaders for each area, just identify a lead) ➤ Aerospace Education: _____ ➤ Leadership: _____ ➤ Physical Fitness: _____ ➤ Character Development: _____	Faculty	
Begin to recruit faculty to CAP officer status	Liaison	
Determine which faculty members will become CAP senior members	Faculty	
Begin to process membership applications (faculty will be assigned to host squadron until chartering of new squadron)	Liaison	
Set up dates for Orientation Course/Cadet Protection Training (typically one Saturday)	Liaison/Host Squadron	

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Student Interest Meeting	Host Squadron Commander/Liaison/ Faculty Leaders	
Choose Location/Time		
Refreshments		
Speakers		
Advertising: School Newsletters, Announcements, Posters, Fliers, Science Classes		
Determine presentation angle (Rocketry Club, Video, Presentation by other cadets are all options)		
Coordinate with the host squadron to ensure squadron staff member present		
Work with host squadron to identify Supporting Organizations (Local Industry, Veterans Groups, etc) for funding, mentoring and volunteer support	Host Squadron Commander/ Liaison	
Determine Initial, Formal Cadet Meeting	Faculty Leaders	
Set and publish: Date/Time: _____ Location: _____	Unit Commander	
Apply for charter	Host Squadron	
Activation ceremony	Host Squadron	
Invite Dignitaries: CAWG/CC Principal Others: _____	Unit Commander/ Liaison	
<i>The following is general guidance for establishing a new unit's activity schedule.</i>		
First quarter	Faculty/ Host Squadron	
Cadet Orientation Course	Host Squadron	
At least 2 non-meeting activities (Rockets, trip, Orientation Flights)	Faculty	
Establish monthly training schedule	Unit Commander	
Liaison will attend each meeting for support	Host Squadron Commander	
Accomplish administrative requirements with host squadron staff ➤ Safety Briefings	Host Squadron	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Logistics Paperwork ➤ Establishing Cadet Records ➤ Set up Cadet Uniform Supply Box 		
Second quarter		
Host Squadron will be represented	Host Squadron Commander	At each meeting
Publish schedules	Unit Commander	Quarterly/monthly
All essential staff positions manned by unit members	Unit Commander	
Review retention planning with new Unit/CC	Liaison	
Review recruitment planning with new Unit/CC	Liaison	
Third & Fourth quarter		
Host Squadron will be represented	Host Squadron Commander	Monthly
Review next year's plan with Unit Commander	Host Squadron Commander	Beginning of each Semester

THE FIRST MEETING

When the charter is received, the squadron commander, with his or her organizing committee, should decide upon a date for the first meeting and plan the first program. Ensure that you receive a supply of membership applications: CAP Forms 12, *Application for Senior Membership in Civil Air Patrol*, and CAP Forms 15, *Application for Cadet Membership in Civil Air Patrol*. It is especially important that announcement of your first meeting be widely disseminated. Parents of eligible youth should be invited to attend first meetings of new cadet or composite squadrons. It is important that the first meeting be well planned.

1. Invocation.
2. Opening remarks and welcome address by one of the sponsors.
3. Introduction of the wing commander (or representative) followed by introduction of the squadron commander and other squadron leaders.
4. Slide/video presentation. Contact HQ CAP, Marketing & Public Relations, for the latest videos suitable for an audience of predominantly new people (Attachment 1 has National Headquarters' address). See if the wing has any local recruiting materials that may be beneficial.
5. Break.
6. Presentation of those facets of CAP not discussed in the slide program. Emphasize the program your unit is going to be (Senior, Cadet, Composite). Discuss the reasons behind starting a CAP unit and the part each new prospective member would play in that squadron. Some suggested additional topics are (but not limited to):
 - a. Purpose of the program -- its mission and objectives.
 - b. How the Air Force supports the program.
 - c. Training requirements/availability.
 - d. Uniforms -- how to get them and how to wear them.
 - e. Membership dues (local, wing, national).
 - f. Scheduled wing and local activities.
7. Question and answer period.
8. Distribution of membership applications for interested applicants.
9. Presentation of charter to squadron commander (if the charter is available).
10. Refreshments.

RETENTION

Retention simply means keeping the people you recruit. CAP is not a cheap organization to belong to and members will renew and pay their dues again only if they are satisfied and feel that they have received value throughout the year. Your members will base their perceptions of value on their interaction with the leaders and other members of your unit and the opportunities your unit provides. If you lose a member, you must recruit two new members to grow. However, if you keep a member, you only have to recruit one to grow. Here are some tips on how to keep your members.

1. ACTIVITIES, ACTIVITIES, ACTIVITIES! Lack of activity or training is one of the most frequently cited reasons for leaving CAP. Try to have an "event" at least every six weeks. It can be anything: a search and rescue exercise (SAREX), an aerospace education workshop, a day dedicated to getting as many cadets in the air on orientation flights as possible, followed by a barbecue or a bowling/pizza party (very good for morale and cohesiveness building).

2. COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE. No one wants to be kept in the dark (the mushroom principle). Post the wing calendar (if there's not one, make one). Let them know what's going on. Talk to your wing commander regularly and pass on to your squadron what was said about upcoming events.

3. PLAN, PLAN, PLAN. A meeting conducted with last-minute planning looks like its been planned at the last minute. It shows a lack of respect to members and the time and money they have spent to be in CAP. Unplanned meetings are BORING and people quit!

4. Set the example. Haircut, uniform, insignias sewn on properly, boots shined -- all in accordance to the "book" (CAP Reg 39-1). Otherwise, how can you expect members to do the same?

5. Award all decorations as soon as they are earned and make a big deal out of it. Doing so encourages others to achieve the same. Take lots of pictures. Post some on the bulletin board or scrapbook and give copies to the member.

6. Make a big deal out of promotions (see above).

7. Always do what you say you will do when you say you will do it. If you can't, explain why you cannot do so as soon as possible. Don't assume the member knows why. *Personal contact is the key to retention.*

8. Require adherence to customs and courtesies. Many cadets are attracted to CAP because of the "military" ambiance and a desire for the structure and discipline CAP offers. They also want the responsibility and a chance to prove that they "can do" and do it well. CAP offers young people the opportunity to be trained in CPR, first aid, navigation (day and night), crash site procedures, radio communications, traffic control, close order drills, direction finding for Emergency Locator

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Transmitters, and lots more. These people are proud of their accomplishments and want to be recognized as being responsible, contributing members of society. CAP provides them an opportunity to be recognized through these accomplishments in a society that may see them simply as “teenagers” and all that implies.

9. Appreciate them for what they are! Cadets (and seniors) come in all shapes and sizes, all colors and backgrounds, rich and poor, good solid families and some not so good. Some may be obnoxious, but they too have potential to achieve. Many cadets come from single-parent homes and need the gap filled in with someone they can trust who respects them.

10. Make sure they know they are appreciated! Don't let a good member "burn out" -- a simple slap on the back or "job well done" can keep a member on the verge of quitting from taking that final step.

11. Give every new member something to do -- RIGHT AWAY!! Most of them come to us asking (or at least thinking) "what can I do to help?" Keep a "to do" list handy of things a newcomer can do. If the newcomer doesn't feel needed (welcome), he/she won't come back. Have new members schedule guests for safety meetings as well as thinking up topics of discussion. The logistics alone will keep them busy.

12. Be sure and GREET the new arrival who slips in the door at your meeting. He or she doesn't know a soul in the place. Have a visitor sign in sheet at the front door. Post GREETERS at the front door as well. Besides ensuring the visitor signs in, have them talk with newcomers; find out their interests; introduce them around; explain the squadron and the meeting; pass out some written material. Finally, a handshake and "thank you for visiting, hope you're here next week." FOLLOW-UP with a phone call before the next meeting.

13. Recruit parents. Parents can be a rich source of senior members. Their natural interest in the program due to their child's participation, make them an ideal audience. Make parents feel welcome as soon as their cadet joins. Fostering an early interest will lead to a lasting relationship. Encourage them to get involved with the unit. Make sure they know the commander (and his or her phone number) and parents of other cadets. A parents' night is a good way to do this. Provide a calendar of events. If it changes, tell them. Encourage them to always check times, dates, chaperons, etc. Make sure adult supervision is waiting for the cadets when parents are delivering a child to an activity.

14. Assign an experienced member to each new member. The experienced member can act as a mentor to the new member. This provides a familiar face and someone to answer questions. A sense of belonging is critical to retention and this is one of the best ways to do that.

BITS, TIPS, AND POWER POINTS

The following is a list of suggestions that are found in *Bits, Tips & Power Points; 500 Practical Ideas and Insights for Nonprofit and Association Leaders* by Richard J. Maladecki. This excellent book of advice is available through the American Society of Association Executives, (202) 626-2723.

Always look people in the eye when speaking to them.

Designate meetings as “team meetings.”

Always return phone calls within 24 hours.

Send personal holiday and birthday cards to your members.

Appoint an individual or become the individual responsible for recording your organization’s local history.

Send out “thank-you-for-your support” letters within 48 hours (personalize the note, if possible).

Maintain accurate staff attendance records.

Hold at least one formal volunteer appreciation function annually.

Learn and use the names of the spouses of your primary volunteers.

Become active in your Chamber of Commerce. Doing so may provide you with valuable contacts.

Send out at least one press release, with photo, per month.

Start and end all meetings on time.

Always remember that you’re in the people business.

Meet periodically with leadership from neighboring units. Exchange information, develop mutually beneficial partnerships (marketing, public relations, etc.), and share concerns.

Design a customized thank you note with matching envelope, featuring your business card.

Consider enrolling in a Dale Carnegie Human Relations Course (scholarship opportunities may be available).

Regularly use cable public-access channels and/or cable community bulletin boards to promote

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your organization's activities.

Build team spirit with programmed social time.

Establish your reputation as an "on time" professional. Always be punctual for meetings.

Maintain accurate personnel files and take the time to update them weekly or monthly.

Solicit volunteer and financial support from local service clubs, such as Kiwanis, Lions, and Rotary.

Print posters to promote an organization activity. Then, post these in store windows (enlist the help of volunteers to place the posters).

Develop a "friends of" the organization group. This group could assist with a special annual fundraising event.

Have your organization participate in an "adopt a highway" program.

Develop master "to do" lists for use before board meetings, volunteer recognition events, special events, trade shows, etc. Refine each yearly.

Conduct a member's orientation for new members.

Strive for positive and effective community relationships.

Periodically, host a staff and spouse gathering (holiday dinner or barbecue) at your home.

On a regular basis, invite a member who has successfully completed one of your organization's educational programs to offer a testimonial at meetings (this helps to create ownership of the program).

Conduct a monthly staff brainstorming session; address one process or procedure per session, with the understanding that conclusions generated will be implemented.

Always be member-sensitive.

Place an advertisement in your local newspaper for volunteers, or check to see if the newspaper has a free listing/column for volunteers.

Secure a booth at a nonprofit fair or shopping mall to promote your organization and to recruit potential volunteers.

Host a "first timers" social event for new members. This will help to make members comfortable.

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Never make a promise to your members or staff that you cannot keep.

If an individual voices a legitimate concern or complaint regarding your organization, visit him or her to address the concern face to face.

Personally, and tactfully, invite non-active members to become involved in one aspect of the organization.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS (CAP Manual 39-2)

INITIAL CADET MEMBERSHIP:

All applicants for cadet membership must meet the following prerequisites:

1. Twelve years old (or attending the sixth grade) through 18 years old.
2. Enrolled in or graduated from a public or private school or college with a satisfactory record of academic achievement.
3. Not married.
4. Not a member of the active duty Armed Forces.
Note: National Guard and Reserve personnel are not considered on active duty unless they are on extended active duty. Basic Military Training (Boot Camp) for Guard or Reserve personnel is not considered extended active duty.
5. United States citizen or alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the U.S. and its territories and possessions or, any lawfully admitted non-citizen residing in the United States who has been specifically approved by the national commander's designee (CAP National Headquarters, DP). **Note:** Refer to CAP Manual 39-2, or consult your wing commander for clarification of any citizenship questions.
6. Good moral character.
7. If a former CAP member, must not have been terminated for bad conduct.
8. Be accepted by the unit and higher headquarters.

INITIAL ADULT OFFICER MEMBERSHIP:

All applicants for adult membership must meet the following prerequisites:

1. Possess the desire, willingness, and capability to promote the objectives and purposes of CAP.
2. Must be at least 18 years old. (Active duty members of the Armed Forces can join CAP as a senior member at any age.)
3. United States citizen or alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States and its territories and possessions or, any lawfully admitted non-citizen residing in the United States who has been specifically approved by the national commander's designee (CAP National Headquarters, DP). **Note:** Refer to CAP Manual 39-2, or consult your wing commander for clarification of any citizenship questions.
4. **Suitability.** Any one or more of the following criteria may be the basis for membership application rejection.
 - a. A felony conviction by any court of record whether federal, state or military.
 - b. A pattern of arrests and/or convictions including but not limited to sex offenses, child abuse, driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI), dishonesty and violence.
 - c. Discharge from the Armed Forces under other than honorable conditions.
 - d. Falsification of information on the membership application.
 - e. Previously terminated or non-renewed for cause from membership in CAP.
 - f. Any other unfavorable information brought to the attention of CAP officials at any level.
5. **Confidential Screening.** All individuals applying for active senior membership must be screened and registered by National Headquarters. The screening process requires that the individual complete a FBI fingerprint card which is used by National Headquarters to request a

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FBI criminal records check. This check is used to determine membership eligibility. Reports are maintained in strict confidence by National Headquarters. National Headquarters will not release these reports or associated documentation.