

CAP Uniform Wear

CAP Officer Basic Course

- **NOTE: Download CAP Manual 39-1, CAP Uniform Manual, Chapters 1, 2, and 4 Before Continuing This Lesson**

http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/forms_publications_regulations/indexes_regulations_and_manuals.cfm

Introduction

Why do people wear uniforms? To be identified? To feel like they belong to a unique team? For protection against the elements and threats? Actually, people wear uniforms for all of these reasons. In Level I, you learned that CAP wears uniforms, and the basics about wear. In this lesson, we'll delve more into why CAP chooses to use uniforms, and how your proper wear of the uniform enhances CAP's image; as well as protects you.

1. Explain the purpose and functions of uniforms.

What is the first thing, for instance, that you identify with the Girl Scouts... I mean besides the cookies? I'll bet it's the green uniform and its badges. How about the Marines? I'll bet it's the dress blue. Uniforms provide identity and functionality.

Proper wear of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) uniform is a not only shows that you belong to CAP, but it is also gives the viewer a first impression of your (and by default the organization's) professionalism. Uniforms also meet a certain standard for functionality and safety for the environment they are designed for. The Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) is uniquely suited for operating safely in a field environment and a Flight Suit meets minimum fire resistant criteria for the safety of the aircrew.

In short, uniforms help CAP members identify with one another and the fine organization to which we are so proud to belong. Taking the time and effort to assemble and wear our uniforms correctly directly reflect on us, our unit, the whole of the Civil Air Patrol, and the US Air Force. It is a matter of pride and professionalism. In order to do it right you will need to have a personal copy of CAP Manual 39-1, CAP Uniform Manual, which governs dress and appearance standards for CAP personnel. If you do not have a copy you will want to download one now. Not only will it be useful every week but you will need it for this lesson, you will need to refer to the photos and the wear descriptions. It can be found at:

http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/forms_publications_regulations/indexes_regulations_and_manuals.cfm

Another resource you might find useful is the uniform mini-posters at

http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/media/cms/Uniform_Mini_Posters_FFEA1A0DBEC38.pdf

(**Note:** If you joined CAP after 2006, you will have received a copy of the mini-posters in your new member binder.)

The CAP Uniform Manual isn't meant to be read like a book. It is a technical manual made so you can look things up. To use it, begin by choosing the uniform you wear to the meeting every week. Find that uniform combination in the manual. Put your uniform together **PROPERLY** following the manual. Bring the manual with you to the meeting. Ask someone knowledgeable, like the personnel officer or a cadet officer, to check that you got it right. If they tell you something is wrong ask them to show you where in the uniform manual you can find the correct instructions, in this way you can find it again. Once you get your weekly meeting uniform correct and don't need to look things up anymore, follow the same pattern with your alternative (utility or flying) uniform. When that is second nature, move on to the weekly meeting uniform worn by others (cadets or opposite gender) until you are knowledgeable about them. Should you find something you think is not in accordance with the uniform manual, ask politely to have the member show you the correct instructions in the manual.

The other thing you need to know about the uniform manual is that it changes; not a lot, but some new (if you will pardon the expression) wrinkle will be added or changed. It's a good idea to download the manual once a year to keep up. With all this in mind, let's build on what you learned in Level I.

2. Describe various uniform combinations for CAP.

Let's examine four of the most commonly worn CAP uniforms. We will briefly discuss some others later. For now you are going to decide whether it's appropriate to wear an Air Force or corporate uniform style. How do you know which one is appropriate? To wear the AF style uniform you must conform to the weight requirements and grooming standards. They can be found on pages 129 and 130 in your uniform manual. Please check them now. If you do not or choose to not meet the weight or grooming standards you must wear the corporate or aviator shirt equivalent uniform. The next deciding factor is what you are going to be doing. In the discussion below you will find comments on when it is appropriate to wear each of the uniforms.

As we discuss four categories of uniforms, we will discuss the options in that category, when they are worn, and things that require special attention when putting the uniform together. In order to be successful in this lesson you will need to turn to the page/figure indicated in the uniform manual and read the appropriate page. As we go through this part of the lesson you should prepare or check the uniform you are going to wear to the next CAP activity.

Service uniform - Short sleeve, minimum/typical uniform worn by officers. - Worn when office attire is appropriate.

Male AF Style - Figure 2-5: Items to pay attention to: nameplate, and ribbons (if worn) rest on top edge of the pocket.

Female AF Style - Figure 2-13: Items to pay attention to: Bottom of nameplate, and ribbons (if worn) are roughly equal with the second button (good taste prevails). Women also have a tuck-in blouse option.

Male and Female AF Style: Ties may be added to short-sleeve and must be added to long-sleeve, hats are worn outside, epaulets (grade) and nameplate are gray, shirts are light blue and pants dark blue. Traditionally AF officers do not wear ribbons on this uniform, but CAP Officers have the option.

Male and Female Corporate Service - 15 March 06 change to CAPM 39-1: Items to pay attention to: nameplate, and ribbons (if worn) rest on top edge of the pocket. Ties may be added to short-sleeve and must be added to long-sleeve, hats are worn outside, epaulets (grade) and nameplate are blue, shirts are white and pants dark blue. AF grooming standards required but not weight standards.

Male Aviator Shirt Style - Figure 4-2: Items to pay attention to: nameplate, and ribbons (if worn) rest on top edge of the pocket. Ties may be added to short-sleeve and must be added to long-sleeve, epaulets (grade) and nameplate are gray, shirts are white and pants gray.

Female Aviator Shirt Style - Figure 4-2: Items to pay attention to: nameplate, and ribbons (if worn) rest on top edge of the pocket. Ties may be added to short-sleeve and must be added to long-sleeve, epaulet covers (grade) and nameplate are gray, shirts are white and pants gray.

Male and Female Golf Shirt Style - Figure 4-3: Items to pay attention to: Pants are gray and shirt is dark blue. No indication of grade is on this shirt so it is not a salutable uniform.

Utility/BDU uniform - Worn when work clothes are appropriate or on operational mission.

Male and Female AF Style Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) - figure 2-17: Items of note: Position and direction of cloth grade, position of name and breast (CAP) tapes. Hat is added when outside. Insignia is ultramarine blue and white (not subdued).

Male and Female Corporate Utility Uniform - Figure 4-6: Items of note: Pants and shirt are blue. Position and direction of cloth grade, position of name and breast (CAP) tapes. Hat is added when outside. Insignia is ultramarine blue and white (not subdued).

Male and Female Golf Shirt Style - Figure 4-3: Items to pay attention to: Not very functional outside of buildings in good condition.

Flying uniforms - Worn while flying in CAP aircraft (corporate and member-owned aircraft used in CAP flight activity).

Male and Female AF Style Flight Suit - Figure 2-19: Items to note: Male uniform is the same. Olive drab in color. Plastic encased grade on the shoulders and placement of leather name/qualification patch, flag. Hat is added when outside.

Male and Female Corporate Style Flight Suit - Figure 4-4: Items to note: Male uniform is the same. Blue in color. Plastic encased grade on the shoulders and leather name/qualification patch, flag.

Male and Female Golf Shirt Style - Figure 4-3: Items to note: Pants are gray and shirt is dark blue. No indication of grade is on this shirt so it is not a salutable uniform.

These combinations will get you through most CAP activities. As you progress through the program you will start to attend more formal meetings and ceremonies. At that time you will want to add a Service Dress or Blazer combination shown below

Service Dress - Appropriate for participating in formal meetings and ceremonies or when more formal office attire is appropriate. Formal meetings would include participating in the National Board Meeting and meeting with government officials.

Male AF Style - Figure 2-1

Female AF Style - Figure 2-9

Male and Female AF Style – No Figure

Items to note: Single breasted., pants and jacket materials match, light blue shirt blue officer braid on the sleeve, both tie and ribbons are required. Hat is worn outdoors.

Male and Female Corporate Style – No Figure

Items to note: Double breasted, pants and jacket material match, white shirt, silver braid on sleeve, both tie and ribbons are required (CAP only). AF grooming standards required but not weight standards.

Male and Female Blazer Style - Figure 4-1

Items to note: Blue blazer, white shirt, gray pants, black name plate with grade, embroidered CAP crest, lots of tricky tie choices.

The basic uniforms outlined in this lesson become fairly straightforward and easy to assemble with practice. It is recommended that you continue your uniform education as you advance in the program. There are a multitude of other authorized uniforms and combinations that we did not cover here. They include: ties/no tie, long/short sleeves, jacket, sweater, rain gear, accessories (purses, cell phones), items for warmth (sweaters, ear muffs, scarves, and parkas), head gear, safety items, cadet variation or the mess dress/tuxedo version and combinations of all of them. The uniforms and variations are detailed in CAPM 39-1 The Civil Air Patrol Uniform Manual.

When assembling your uniform prior to wearing it, it is always a good idea to have a copy of the manual open to help ensure you are meeting all standards. Take the time to skim through the manual (even the portions that don't apply to you) so you know enough about the uniform standards to assist other members of your unit. One of the most common issues found with improper uniform wear is that members are either ill-informed through word of mouth or they don't know where to find the answer to their uniform questions. Having a working knowledge of this pivotal document will make you a more effective team member and will help your unit to present a more professional image. You may also find additional uniform information in Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2903, Dress and Appearance of Air Force Personnel. This document sets the standards from which CAP bases its uniform manual.

Finally, don't be afraid to ask for assistance in preparing a uniform. One of the greatest points of reference new members have at their disposal are cadets. The cadet program places greater emphasis on uniform knowledge and presentation making cadets a great source of uniform knowledge. By asking the question, you will also have the added benefit of increasing dialogue, teamwork, and ultimately trust between the cadet program members and the senior officers.

3. Discuss the importance of proper uniform wear to the function and image of CAP.

As the authors of the lesson on Professionalism said,

"A professional looks the part. ...When we wear the Air Force uniform, it marks us as a professional organization that is affiliated with the Air Force. What we do and say in public affects how the general population thinks about the Air Force and the military in general. From a distance, we look like Air Force members, not CAP members.

Remember this adage: "You never have a second chance to make a first impression." You will be continuously making "first impressions" in CAP. Make any impression the best you possibly can."

In the lesson on Customs and Courtesies the author said:

"It is professional. CAP wears the uniform of a military professional. We want to act that way even though we are "unpaid professionals". This is related to the core value of excellence.

It builds esprit-de-corps. The display of respect for one another and our common purpose makes us feel a part of the group. The restrictive use of these courtesies make us part of a special group. Those groups are more than just CAP. They include the AF, all uniformed branches and the veterans and heroes of previous generations. ...

The same is true of the uniform. "It makes us part of something far larger than ourselves." (Spenser, 2009)

Think about it this way: who would you rather have cook you meal at a restaurant: someone in a soiled shirt, unshaven, with food on his shoes; or someone in sparkling clean whites and clean, shined shoes? Even if the cook with the soiled shirt is the better chef, the perception people likely have of him is that he, his food, and his restaurant are poor. How we look contributes mightily to our customer's perception of us and our organization.

While the Unit Personnel Officer is charged by regulation to insure that members of that unit wear the uniform properly, it also falls to each member to not only wear the uniform properly but to point out incorrect wear to fellow members. Wearing the uniform properly says a lot about you as well. The way you wear your uniform is a reflection of your attention to detail, your self-discipline, your self-respect, it is a measure of your esprit-de-corps, your desire to do things professionally and achieve excellence. How do you want to be thought of? Does your uniform project that image?

4. Distinguish among proper times to wear the CAP uniform.

Let's look at some situations to see when it is appropriate to wear the CAP uniform and when it is not. Answer YES, for it is appropriate, or NO, for it is not appropriate, to wear a CAP uniform for each statement below. After, turn to pages 6 and 7 of the uniform manual. Read Table 1-1 and see how you did.

SITUATIONS:

1. When at a CAP meeting.
2. More than 1 hour following the close of a CAP event or meeting except for travel time.
3. When participating in a picket line.
4. When going to a public demonstration or speech not approved by the US Air force.
5. When engaged/furthering private employment or commercial interests.
6. When going to a dinner or event on a military installation.
7. When visiting a military installation.

ANSWERS:

1. Yes
2. No
3. No
4. No
5. No
6. Yes
7. Yes

Lesson Summary and Closure

You have a lot of choices about what to wear. You only have one choice on how to wear it, correctly and proudly. The manual is there to help you do that. Use it and look professional and proud.

Works Cited

CAPM 39-1, Civil Air Patrol Uniform Manual. 23 March 2005 OPR: CAP/DP 105 S. Hansell St., Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6332