



# CAP Core Values

## GOALS FOR THIS MODULE

1. Understand the rationale behind each of the CAP core values.
2. Discuss how CAP core values can be applied on a daily basis.
3. Discuss the origin of CAP core values.
4. Restate the CAP core values.
5. Describe the cultural importance of the core values to CAP.

Core values are essential to an organization's mission and vision. They hold an organization together through time, transcending leadership and environmental change. An organization's core values represent the baseline of an ethical code of conduct expected from all members.

There is a difference between Civil Air Patrol and most other volunteer organizations. That difference is reflected in CAP's connection to a military arm of the government as the auxiliary of the United States Air Force when on Air Force assigned missions. There is a commonality of core values and the expectation that members will act on them on behalf of the common good.

In Civil Air Patrol, core values are at the heart of a code of ethics for all members to follow if they wish to participate in CAP activities.

**CORE VALUES  
OF CIVIL AIR PATROL**  
***Integrity***  
***Volunteer Service***  
***Excellence***  
***Respect***

## Core Values Defined

The meanings of the words for the CAP core values can be easily understood, but it is important that they be examined from CAP's unique perspective. Through discussion and introspection, the goal is for members to establish the connection between the organization's values and their own individual values and learn how to integrate them into their actions as CAP members.

Core values are the essential and enduring tenets of an organization – a very small set of guiding principles that have a profound impact on how everyone in the organization thinks and acts.

*Harvard Business Review  
Building Your Company's Vision  
James Collins and Jerry Porras*

The core values of ***Integrity, Volunteer Service, Excellence, and Respect*** serve as CAP's ethical framework for its service to America. These are based on the core values of the U.S. Air Force: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. The CAP core value "volunteer service" adds the concept of volunteerism to the Air Force core value "service before self" since this essential concept is the basis of the CAP organization. "Respect" was also added to the CAP core values for additional emphasis on the importance of interpersonal relationships. As a volunteer force, it is especially important that each member internalize these character traits in order to ensure CAP's success.

## Integrity

Integrity is the cornerstone of the core values. It is the quality of being honest, sincere, and morally upright; and without it, the other core values cannot prevail. Integrity requires discipline, consistency and persistence in order to reflect the core values in everyday life. In practice, it involves doing the right thing, understanding and implementing not just the rules and regulations but the *spirit* of what they stand for. Former Air Force Chief of Staff, General Charles A. Gabriel said, “Integrity is the fundamental premise of service in a free society. Without integrity, the moral pillars of our military strength – public trust and self-respect – are lost.”

Integrity is the willingness to do what is right even when no one else is looking.

One attribute of integrity is forthright honesty. This means being someone others can rely on for accurate, complete, and timely disclosure of information. It also involves accepting responsibility for one’s actions.

Integrity is central to the whole self, to being a morally upright person of good character. The origin of the word integrity from the Latin *integritas* means having no part or element lacking, completeness, an undivided state. The following quote is from an article by former Secretary of the Air Force, Sheila Widnall and former Air Force Chief of Staff, General Ronald Fogleman:

“ Integrity is essential. It’s the inner voice, the source of self-control, the basis for the trust that is imperative in today’s military. It’s doing the right thing when nobody’s looking.”

## Volunteer Service

One of CAP’s core values is volunteer service. The Air Force has a similar value called “service before self.” We embrace this core value and reflect it in our spirit of volunteerism. It is the willingness and ability to give of oneself, and it goes beyond simply giving our time.

*Voluntarily giving of oneself, over personal desires, to provide for the welfare of others is the embodiment of volunteer service.*

Serving involves following rules, showing respect for others, enforcing discipline, and exhibiting self-control. An important component of volunteer service is the willingness to accept, promote, and follow the rules and regulations of CAP and the Air Force as well as the laws of our communities and our nation.



To serve is to satisfy the needs or requirements of an organization and, in the case of CAP, is to render service to one’s nation. The moral ideal, however, demands more than obedience. Service also demands that members always serve out of respect for human dignity. Service means duty, and duty means respect and dignity. Members must always keep that foremost in their actions.

On a more practical level, one traditional aspect of CAP exemplifies the concept of service: wearing the CAP uniform and what it represents. CAP members feel that they are an identifiable component of the Air Force team, and the uniform is the visible evidence of this. Most importantly, the uniform signifies that the wearer is a member of a professional organization and reinforces the ideal of service before self.

## Excellence

CAP members should always be in continual pursuit of excellence; there is no room for the “good enough” mentality. Fulfilling Civil Air Patrol’s three missions of emergency service, cadet programs, and aerospace education often results in *shaping lives* and *saving lives*, humanitarian volunteer work too important to be just “good enough.”

*Excellence challenges members to develop a sustained passion for continuous improvement and innovation to enable CAP to grow and flourish in serving America’s humanitarian needs.*

Excellence starts with commitment, commitment to CAP’s values and missions. In CAP, the nature of the mission demands persistent focus on results and getting the job done right. Mission failure can have disastrous consequences and cannot be accepted. As a moral ideal, however, excellence demands more than mission accomplishment. To excel is to surpass, to go beyond what is expected. Members must constantly strive for such results.

Brigadier General (Ret.) Malham M. Wakin wrote in an article on Air Force core values:

“Why strive for excellence anyway? One answer to that question may seem wonderfully simple, perhaps some would rather I said, “simple minded.” If I settle for less than my best effort, then I must live with less than my best self, and I won’t then like myself very much. I shall fall short of the kind of being I could have become; I may even be what modern psychiatrists suggest is very unhealthy--I may be ashamed of what I become.”

CAP members cannot accept the status quo. In a world of rapid change, today’s answers likely will not satisfy tomorrow’s questions. The following is a quote from a commentary by former Secretary of the Air Force, Sheila Widnall and former Air Force Chief of Staff, General Ronald Fogleman:

“Because we’ve been entrusted with our nation’s security and a good portion of the national treasure--because our mission often involves the risk of human life and sometimes national survival--because we are authorized to act on behalf of our entire society--then the obligation to excel is a moral obligation for members of a professional force.”

# Respect

Genuine respect involves viewing another person as an individual of fundamental worth. This means that a person should never be

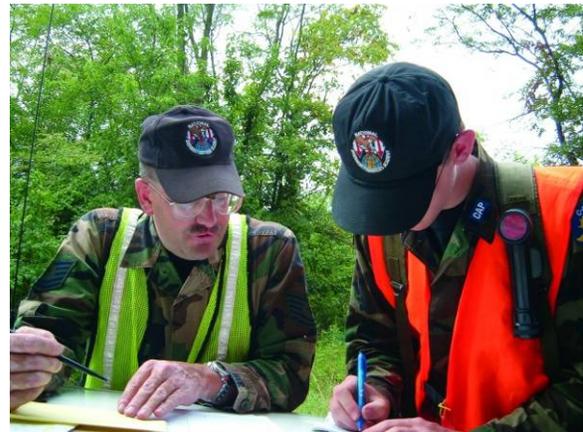
Respect in CAP is shown when members value diversity. CAP members treat each other with fairness, dignity, and compassion. Because of the different skills and abilities individuals contribute to the organization, excellence through teamwork is strengthened.

judged based on external attributes (e.g., race, ethnicity, economic status, gender). Judging a person by his or her differences might serve to categorize the person and unfairly typify the value of their abilities or contributions.

The effectiveness of any organization is greatly dependent upon the environment in which people work. The CAP culture should always be based on mutual respect, where there is due regard for the feelings and rights of others.

Consider the following examples of CAP unit applications of core values:

Would you try to do what's best for the unit, even if it meant some personal inconvenience? How about a minor inconvenience, like giving up a Saturday to take cadets for a field exercise, or calling the flight release officer before flying that proficiency sortie? How about a major inconvenience, like going out at 2:00 am on a cold January morning to search for an Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) even though you know with a 99% probability that it would be a false alarm? These examples are the essence of the core value of volunteer service.



## Core Values Applied

Values such as CAP's core values should be part of daily life. You expect the people you buy from to be honest with you (integrity) or you don't do business with them. You expect them to go out of their way to meet your needs (service). You expect reliability from their products (excellence). And, you expect them to recognize and appreciate the fact that you don't have to buy from them if they violate these expectations (respect). The application of CAP's core values has meaning not only in CAP but also in personal and professional relationships and at work, at school, or at home.

Don't you feel great when you know your job better than anyone else and you deliver top-notch results? Don't you feel great when you are learning a new job, are challenged to try your best, and you succeed? What about those who just coast on an assignment or go through the motions? How about mistakes that didn't need to occur? The core value of excellence means not settling for average performance but always striving to learn more and exceed expectations.

Which commander would you rather work for? What about someone who inspires you, appreciates the work you do, is calm and fair, and encourages teamwork? Or what if your commander is quick tempered, doesn't

recognize your CAP contributions, demands respect based on rank yet shows no interest in you personally, and relies on intimidation to achieve results? Which type of leader would you want to work for? Which type of leader will you strive to be? It is all about living CAP's core values.



Core values have very real implications. They are not vague concepts or mottos to be repeated in the hope that by repetition they will catch on. They hold an organization together through time; they are the tenets and guiding principles of the organization.

CAP's core values require both a personal and an organizational commitment. The result will be that all members see themselves as active participants in promoting and safeguarding the CAP culture of integrity, respect, volunteer service, and excellence.

**REFERENCE:**

Civil Air Patrol Pamphlet 50-2, *Civil Air Patrol Core Values*.