

# Great Start



## SQUADRON GUIDE

PROVIDING SQUADRON LEADERS with GUIDELINES for the CIVIL AIR PATROL'S GREAT START PROGRAM



INTEGRITY • VOLUNTEER SERVICE • EXCELLENCE • RESPECT

## Objective

---

Our new members deserve a great start in CAP. The Great Start project helps to welcome and orient prospective members by equipping them with the knowledge of what to do during their first year in CAP.

## At a Glance

---

John wants to volunteer in his community and thinks that CAP would fit his interests. He visits your squadron and is greeted with a warm “Hello” and introduced to Dave, who guides John through a booklet entitled “Great Start.”

After discussing the booklet with Dave, John decides to join your squadron. Dave continues to connect with John as they discuss the new member checklists on what to do during John’s first year of membership.

At the end of the first year, John is excited to proceed with his training and renews his membership. He continues to contribute back to his community through the Civil Air Patrol.

## Overview

---

Every squadron can easily duplicate what John and Dave did in our example above. The greeter, the “Great Start” booklet, the mentor and the new member checklists are all easy-to-implement elements of the Great Start project.

The main element of this project is the “Great Start” booklet, which answers frequently asked questions and details how we value the prospective member’s experiences.

Another element of this project is the new member checklists. These checklists help the new member in learning what to accomplish during his or her first year of membership in CAP.

The final element of this project is the “Great Start Squadron Guide.” This guide helps squadron leaders understand the Great Start project and how best to carry out this program in the squadron.

By using all three elements of the Great Start project, our new members will have a great start in CAP.

## Squadron Responsibilities

---

You should become familiar with the elements of the Great Start project: the greeter, the “Great Start” booklet, the mentor and the new member checklists. This “Great Start Squadron Guide” describes these elements in detail.

The “Great Start” booklet is written as a guide for a member to share with those who take the time to visit your squadron. The booklet is not designed to be used at air shows or recruiting booths, as there are other materials that are more appropriate for those events.

To maximize the growth potential for your squadron, you should assign at least two active members to this project: a greeter and a mentor. Their responsibilities are described below.

Because CAP loses many of its first year members, your squadron should host an informal gathering of your new members at least twice per year. This gathering allows your new members to discuss their contributions to the community through CAP. You will discover that this special time together will help you, too, as you listen to your new members – their feedback is important to your squadron’s growth!

There are two major goals for squadron growth that depend on your leadership:

- Create active members
- Renew members.

This easy-to-implement Great Start project will help.

## The Great Start Booklet

---

The “Great Start” booklet is a quick summary of CAP’s programs. It answers many of the frequently asked questions that prospective members raise.

When sharing this booklet with prospective members, keep in mind that these visitors to your squadron have already taken a major step toward membership. They have taken the time to visit you!

We should value their initial interest by spending a few moments with them, getting to know who they are, what their interests are and why they wish to volunteer.

Prospective members can enrich our volunteer organization with a wealth of experiences they can bring to CAP. Civil Air Patrol is an organization that grows only through its members. As the squadron leader, you have a wonderful opportunity to connect a member of your community with the interests of CAP and your squadron.

The “Great Start” booklet helps your prospective members make this connection, because CAP is ideally suited for youth and adults who value the following:

- An interest in aviation;
- A desire to belong to a worthy cause;
- An opportunity to exercise leadership; and
- A dedication to professional service.

Your prospective members need to know you are listening to their questions. For this reason, the “Great Start” booklet should not simply be given to a visitor to read. Rather, a CAP member should guide the visitor through the booklet, allowing your guest to ask questions. Once you share the booklet, the prospective members can keep it for further reference.

## The New Member Checklist

---

The “Great Start” booklet includes a general checklist for senior members. The checklist is designed to:

- Show the prospective members what to expect during their first year of membership and
- Assimilate the new members into CAP’s training and professional development programs.

Additional checklists are also available. For example, there is a “Pilot Checklist” designed to help a pilot become a CAP mission pilot, and a “Clergy Checklist” designed to help a member of the clergy become a CAP Chaplain.

Don’t see a checklist that you need? Create one! Submit your checklist for consideration to the address listed in the feedback section of this squadron guide.

## Feedback

---

We welcome your suggestions and comments! Write or email to:

Great Start Project  
HQ CAP/PD  
105 S. Hansell St  
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6332  
prodev@capnhq.gov

## The Role of the Greeter

---

You would be surprised at how often we hear from prospective members that they did not join CAP, because when they visited the local squadron, no one talked to them! Your assignment is to provide the initial contact with visitors so they will know your squadron is welcoming.

Checklist:

- Project a positive CAP image (In proper uniform and grooming standards).
- Greet your visitors with a positive attitude!
- Introduce yourself and call the visitors by their name.
- Answer questions the visitors may have (If you can’t answer a question, find someone who can).
- Introduce the visitors to your squadron commander and to the Great Start mentor.

## The Role of the Mentor

---

You have a key role in the Great start project! Your assignment is to:

- Guide the prospective member through the “Great Start” booklet
- Help the prospective member to join
- Guide the new member’s first year using the new member checklist.

Take some time to read through the “Great Start” booklet and new member checklist now, so you will be better prepared when visitors arrive at your squadron.

### Checklist:

- Project a positive CAP image (In proper uniform and grooming standards).
- Introduce yourself and call the visitor, now your prospective member, by his/her name.
- Inquire as to how he/she learned about CAP.
- Inquire as to why he/she was interested in joining CAP.
- Record contact information.
- Provide unit information (including unit history, calendar of upcoming events, meeting time, meeting location and any other pertinent information).
- Guide the prospective member through the “Great Start” booklet.
- Answer any questions the prospective member may have (If you can’t answer a question, find someone who can).
- Guide the prospective member through the new member checklist.
- Guide the prospective member to join, without pressure or over-promising.



**CIVIL AIR PATROL**

To learn more, call 1-800-FLY-2338 or go to [www.cap.gov/start](http://www.cap.gov/start)