



TRAINING LEADERS of CADETS
 BASIC COURSE
LESSON PLAN

3.2 Squadron Meetings

- VERSION:** April 2016 *please verify this is the latest version by visiting capmembers.com/TLC*
- DURATION:** 50 minutes approximately, and subtopic times shown in margins below are also approximate
- INSTRUCTOR:** Unit commander or deputy commander for cadets with 2 years' experience suggested
- KEY QUESTION:** What are the hallmarks of great squadron meetings?
- OBJECTIVES:**
1. Identify key principles affecting a weekly meeting's success
 2. Identify the minimum monthly instructional requirements, per CAPR 52-16
 3. Describe the components of the 5-part suggested meeting schedule
 4. Discuss practical ways to coordinate meeting schedules
 5. Discuss practical ways to prepare cadet instructors using a "check ride" system
- SIMPLE OUTLINE:**
1. Starter: A visit to the local squadron
 2. Key principles of successful meetings
 3. Minimum monthly requirements
 4. Weekly meeting template
 5. Schedule coordination process
 6. Check ride system for cadet instructors
 7. Best practices
 8. Activity
 9. Final thought
- CLASS ACTIVITIES:** Group discussions, an optional follow-along memory-jogger worksheet, and an activity where students use the *Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner* to draft a meeting schedule
- EQUIPMENT:** Butcher paper / easel pad with markers is highly recommended; white board also suggested; blank copies of the Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner



Welcome & Starter

2 min

Let's read this brief report of one parent's visit to the local squadron.

Have a student read slide #1 aloud.

Raise your hand if you've been to that squadron meeting. *It's expected that most students have.*

This brief report shows the importance of planning great squadron meetings, and that's what we'll discuss in the next 45 minutes.





Overview

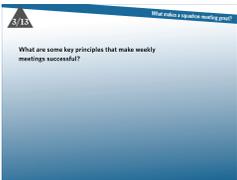
1 min

Our key question for the next 45 minutes is: “What are the hallmarks of great squadron meetings?”

To answer that key question, we’ll consider five topics:

1. Key principles
2. Minimum monthly requirements
3. Meeting template
4. Check ride system
5. Best practices

In addition to these discussion-based topics, we’ll have some hands-on learning through two activities, one where you critique a sample meeting schedule, and another where you develop a schedule on your own.



Key Principles of Great Squadron Meetings

5 min

Q1: What are some key principles that make weekly meetings successful?

A: Varies. Accept anything close to what’s shown on the next slide.

Record student replies on butcher paper and then tack the finished notes to the wall. Alternatively, use a white board to record student replies.

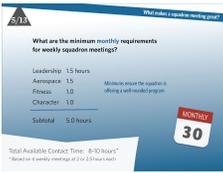


Listed here on the slide are five key principles to summarize what we’ve just discussed.

Emphasis Item: When we survey cadets who’ve allowed their memberships to lapse, one of their top reasons for leaving is that squadron meetings are “boring” or “poorly planned.”

Therefore, it’s important for squadrons to consistently reach for these principles. You can’t produce great cadets unless you have great weekly squadron meetings.

Transition: Let’s get more specific and look at what content goes into a great meeting.



Minimum Monthly Requirements

3 min

We need our squadron meetings to be well-rounded. That is, squadron meetings ought to offer classes and activities that touch on all four program elements. We can't really do that at every single meeting, so the goal is to provide a certain amount of activities in each program element over the course of a month. In other words, we have minimum monthly requirements for weekly squadron meetings.

Q1: Your squadron has 8 to 10 contact hours per month, and 5 of those hours are programmed for minimum requirements. What does that mean for the other 3 to 5 hours?

A1: Varies. Squadrons have flexibility. If model rocketry is your big project that month, for example, you could double-up the contact hours in aerospace. Also, you'll need some of the time at the beginning and end of the meeting, which we'll discuss in a moment.

Transition: Let's get more specific and look at a suggested template for the weekly meeting.



Weekly Meeting Template

5 min

This suggested template contains five main parts.

1. Opening formation
2. Emphasis item
3. Training block #1
4. Training block #2
5. Closing formation

Every week would follow this outline. What changes is the content you place into each part.

Q1: What are some positives you see regarding this template?

A1: Answers vary. Some possible responses include:

It has a clear beginning and end.

The main training blocks are long enough to do meaningful activities in each.

Having two main training blocks means each meeting can have some variety in the activities offered, and therefore each cadet is apt to have something of interest available

Time is set aside for administrative needs like announcements and promotions.

By having a standard template, squadron members, especially staff, know how the various activities need to fit together – what's practical to do, and what the practical limitations are.

Transition: We've discussed schedule content, but for great execution, the full staff needs to coordinate on the plan. Next, let's consider a schedule coordination process.



Schedule Coordination Process

8 min

Perhaps the first step in having well-coordinated meeting schedules involves your squadron adopting a *regular pattern* governing the type of content programmed in a given week.

Q1: Do any of you already follow a regular monthly pattern for meeting schedules?

A1: e.g., Week 1 is leadership and character, uniform is Blues, promotions are made.

A good pattern links each week of the month with training content, administrative tasks, and a uniform requirement.

So we have a pattern guiding the training and uniforms and administrative tasks scheduled each week of the month. Next we need to discuss the coordination *process* itself.

Our suggested best practice is illustrated on the slide.

1. Draft
2. Coordinate
3. Approve
4. Execute

Your squadron is welcome to adjust this suggested process, but what's ultimately required is

1. You plan your meetings in advance, versus "winging it" the night of the meeting.
2. Local leaders give the senior and cadet staff an opportunity to review the meeting plan and to comment on it.
3. The final plan, approved by the commander, be available to all, 48 hours in advance.

Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner

Thanks to cloud computing, everyone in your squadron can see the draft plan, comment upon it, and generally work together to get the plan just right. The Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner is an optional form that can help your whole team develop a highly detailed training plan for your meetings.

Show and tell with the form briefly. Toward the end of this lesson, students will participate in an activity where they'll use the form. Some show and tell items to emphasize:

Staff Coordination: As your squadron's leadership team reviews the plan, there's a place for them to check-off and show they concur with the plan.

Announcements: It's not enough to say, "We take 5 minutes for announcements at the start of the meeting." To be successful, you have to identify what those announcements will be so nothing is forgotten.

Emphasis Item: If the cadets are doing drill, what kind of drill? As a single group, or in flights / elements? Again, specificity is the key.

Training Blocks: Here's a space so that the AEO or CDI (or whoever) can communicate on preparations for his session. ("We'll be outdoors for part of the lesson. It gets dark early, so know that my AE lesson has to happen during block #1.")

Concurrent Tasks: If the bulk of the cadets are doing one activity, you may need to pull individuals out and take care of promotion boards, or gather the senior staff to talk finances. Here's a place to plan for that.

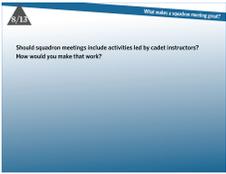
Q2: The slide shows three technology tools for sharing documents. Does anyone have experience with these platforms or have a suggestion to share?

A1: Answers vary.

If possible, pull-up the sample *Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner* and show the students how reviewers can mark-up a draft plan with their comments.

If your squadron develops good habits in coordinating meeting plans, the cadet staff and senior leadership will get along better. Cadets who are jealous about having their say in planning the meeting have a means to be heard, and you can task them with writing the plan's first draft while you maintain quality control. Simply put, good coordination habits means your squadron will get along and will run successful meetings.

Transition: Staff coordination helps your meetings' quality control. Another factor affecting quality is your use of cadets as instructors. Let's now consider how to manage that.



Cadets as Instructors / Check Ride System

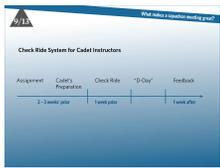
6 min

Q1: Should squadron meetings include activities led by cadet instructors? Why?

A1: Answers vary. Leadership is developed through experience, so cadets need opportunities to apply their learning, demonstrate their skills, and grow.

Q2: More to the point, how would you make a cadets-as-instructors strategy work?

A2: Answers vary. Some kind of pre-brief, quality check, and feedback mechanism is needed.



The slide shows our suggested check ride system for cadet instructors. Note that it begins a couple weeks before the cadet actually executes the lesson or activity. And, the cadet will present a specific, detailed plan and/or rehearse the presentation with the senior mentor.

Assignment	Cadet's Preparation	Check Ride	"D-Day"	Feedback
2 - 3 weeks' prior	1 week prior			1 week after

The more experienced a cadet becomes, the less involved the senior needs to be, but cadets in the C/2d Lt range and lower will require a close hewing to this check ride model.

Q3: Let's talk worst case scenario. Suppose it's check ride time, 1 week prior to the cadet's class or activity, and the cadet is unprepared or simply not ready for this leadership opportunity, for whatever reason. How do you respond?

A3: Answers vary, but should mention the possibility of rescheduling the cadet to a later date, having the cadet team-teach with someone more experienced, or less desirable, having the senior run this particular activity out of logistical necessity, but taking care to give the cadet another opportunity in the near future.

Q4: Has anyone tried a check ride system like this? How did it go?

A4: Answers vary, but try to reinforce the need for a pre-brief, quality check, and feedback.

Emphasis Item. A hands-off approach may appear to grant the cadet freedom to lead. In reality, it sets the cadet up for failure because adolescent wisdom can take him or her only so far. Your adult guidance is needed. Moreover, without adult supervision of the cadet's plans, coaching during the event, and feedback afterward, your squadron meetings' quality will suffer.

Transition: We've had some good discussions and equipped you with some practical tools for planning, coordinating, and implementing successful weekly squadron meetings. Now let's put that knowledge to use through some activities.



Best Practices

5 min

Q1: So far, everything in this lesson has been prepared by National Headquarters, but surely some of us have good ideas about squadron meetings that could be shared. Briefly, in 20 seconds or less, explain your potential best practice.

A1: Answers vary. *Collect them via the whiteboard or butcher paper. Be aware that it's possible that someone could suggest a practice that is contrary to CAP policy, or possibly imprudent.*



Activity

14 min

Use blank Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner to develop a plan for an upcoming squadron meeting. See the slide for further instructions. (This exercise is a simulation; students are not expected to actually implement this particular meeting plan.)



The objective of this activity is not to practice filling-out a blank form. Rather, it is for the student to demonstrate understanding of how a meeting's five main parts fit together, and to do so in a way that shows a commitment to detailed planning.

It's recommended that you circulate among the students and informally check their work and provide coaching as necessary.



Final Thought

1 min

We covered a lot of ground in this session. The key point is that because great squadron meetings are a key factor in cadet retention, we need to strive for high-quality meetings every week. Doing that takes planning and staff coordination using the Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner, and even more importantly, hands-on activities will keep the meetings fun.