TRAINING LEADERS *of* **CADETS**
BASIC COURSE
LESSON PLAN

3.2 Squadron Meetings

VERSION:	October 2021 *please verify this is the latest version by visiting gocivilairpatrol.com/TLC*
DURATION:	60 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 60-1, 4.3
	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 squadron 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: Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner
	9. Final thought
CLASS ACTIVITIES:	Group discussions 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 (provided in student packet)

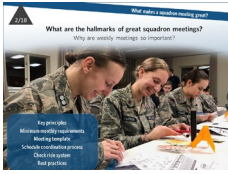### Welcome & Starter   2 min

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 hour.

## Overview   1 min

Our key question for the next hour 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.
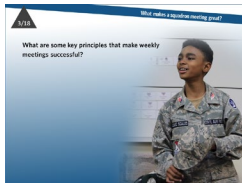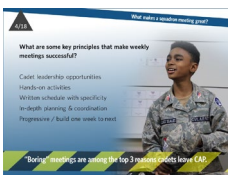

Key Principles of Great Squadron Meetings   5 min

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

A1:   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.
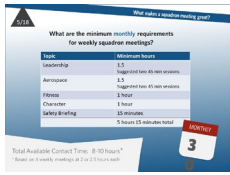
Minimum Monthly Requirements   **5 min**

Our squadron meetings need to be well-rounded. 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 number of activities in each program element over the course of a month. In other words, we have minimum monthly requirements for weekly squadron meetings. Minimum monthly requirements are listed in CAPR 60-1, 4.3.

Q1: Your squadron has 8 to 10 contact hours per month, and 5.25 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.

For reference:

MONTHLY TRAINING REQUIREMENTS		
Topic	Sample Activities	Minimum Contact Hours
Leadership	Classroom instruction, drill and ceremonies, team leadership problems, and similar activities	1.5 hours Two 45-min. sessions suggested
Aerospace	Classroom instruction, "AEX" activities, tours, rocketry, cyber defense, and similar activities	1.5 hours Two 45-min. sessions suggested
Fitness	Classroom instruction, fitness games and activities, fitness testing, and similar activities	1 hour
Character	Character activities using approved resources only	1 hour

These guidelines provide a baseline for cadet training, expressing CAP's desire for units to offer activities in each of the four main program elements each month. Units may exceed these guidelines and fill any remaining contact hours with electives (e.g. special projects, emergency services training, community service, etc.). Units may be required to conduct safety training (see CAPR 160-1, *CAP Safety Program*).

60-1 Table 4.2.

Every cadet and senior member is required to receive safety education at least once during each calendar month. *See CAPR 160, CAP Safety Program, 5.2.1*
There are a number of resources on the Safety Education section of the National Website to help you or your Safety Officer put together a short 15-minute briefing.

Transition: Let's get more specific and look at a suggested template for the weekly meeting.
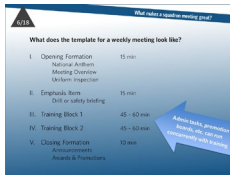
Weekly Meeting Template   5 min

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   15 min

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? What are the Pros to this?

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.
- Everyone has inherent knowledge about what is taking place and when.
- CP Officers will always know when their specialty will take place so they can plan their personal schedule around it. e.g AEO knows that AE is on week 1 & 2 and can plan accordingly.

Emphasis Item: This type of plan ensures you are meeting the minimum monthly training requirements for each area of the cadet program, listed in CAPR 60-1, 4.3.

What kind of content do you fill those training blocks with? Your yearly goals and the monthly calendar will inform these choices.
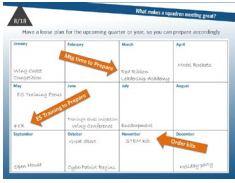
Q2: Do any of you have a monthly planning calendar to have a loose structure to ensure that you meet your yearly goals?

A2: A written layout of the year ensures that you make space for the activities and lessons that will allow you to meet you yearly goals. This plan will inform how you fill your elective blocks and what content is covered in the regular training blocks, creating a cohesive experience for cadets. Example, your weeks of ES training will culminate in an ES weekend. The *Aerospace Dimensions* module on rockets could come right before you begin your Model Rocketry Badge. You won't forget to plan squadron meeting time to prepare the cadets to lead the Red Ribbon Leadership Academy.
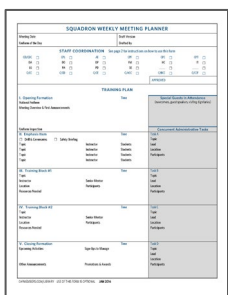
Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner

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.

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.

Which cloud-based system you use will vary throughout the organization. The trend seems to be moving towards Microsoft Teams but check with your wing to ensure you are using the locally-approved platform.

Q3: Does anyone have experience with a sharing platform that works well for their squadron?

A3: *Answers vary.*

The Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner is an optional form that can help your whole team develop a highly detailed training plan for your meetings.

Go to the website *to show where they can access this form in the Cadet Library.*
There is a sample of both a blank and a completed form in the Student Handbook.

Toward the end of this lesson, students will participate in an activity where they'll use the form. Briefly point out the different areas of the form:

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 he 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.

Closing Formation: Again, be specific as to what is going to happen that night. If you have planned 4 promotions, and several announcements, 5 minutes probably isn't enough time, and now you can plan the schedule accordingly.
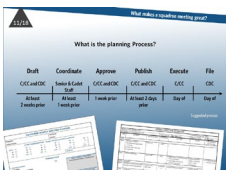
Our suggested best practice for coordination and planning is illustrated on the slide.
1. Draft   2. Coordinate   3. Approve   4. Publish   5. Execute   6. File

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 is approved by the commander
4. The finalized schedule will be available to all, 48 hours in advance.
5. Carry out the schedule as planned
6. The plan will be filed and kept for future Subordinate Unit Inspection (SUI) purposes.
    a. Three months of schedules must be kept on file
    b. Must show that you are meeting the required monthly minimums
    c. The SUI will request this digitally

The squadron Weekly Meeting Planner is a great tool for planning, then likely you will transfer that information into a schedule format. Sample meeting schedule in the Student Packet.

Cadets will have a say in planning the meeting have a means to be heard. The Cadet Commander should work in conjunction with adult leaders to plan the schedule. The ranking cadet staff should drive this process, guided by adult leaders as quality control, and ultimately approved by the unit commander. Ensure you Cadet Commander has an understanding of the larger picture and of the expectations, so he can carry out this duty correctly.

If your squadron develops good habits in coordinating meeting plans, the cadet staff and senior leadership will get along better. 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.

Ending Meetings on Time

It is important to end meetings on time. Planning is key to this. If you are constantly running 10-15 minutes over because of last minute announcements and promotions, then you haven't planned your schedule well, or in enough detail.

- Consider moving promotions to opening formation; perhaps skip inspection on promotion night.
- Be sure to detail out in the schedule planner what EXACTLY the announcements will be, so you can be sure you have enough time
- Be sure to adjust activities earlier in the evening to allow for enough time for closing formation. The TRUE amount you will need.
- Be sure to include transition times. Your cadets will not teleport to the formation field.

Q4: Does anyone have any other tips on how to end meetings on time?

A4: *Answers vary.*
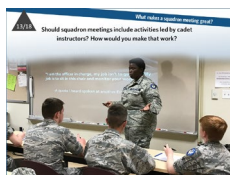
Cadets as Instructors / Check Ride System   6 min

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

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

Q2: So 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.
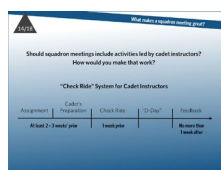
The slide demonstrates our suggested check ride system for cadet instructors. Note that it begins a couple weeks before the cadet actually executes the lesson or activity. And, the cadet will present a specific, detailed plan and/or rehearse the presentation with the senior mentor.

Assignment	Cadet's Preparation	Check Ride	"D-Day"	Feedback
At least 2 – 3 weeks' prior		1 week prior		No more than 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.

Feedback: Don't let this piece slip through the cracks. The feedback conversation is an important opportunity for a cadet to reflect on their experience and to evaluate how it went, the good and the bad. Reflection is a KEY component of learning, and ensuring that this happens will help to build better leaders in your squadron.

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. *See CAPP 60-11, 3.11 for more information the Check Ride System*

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:   Does anyone have practice that they use at their squadron that they would like to share? 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 irresponsible. Be ready to redict those answers to reflect current CAP policy.*

Activity: Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner   15 min

Use blank Squadron Weekly Meeting Planner CAPF 60-83 (available in the Student Packet) 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.
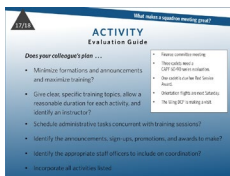
Once eveyone is nearing the end of the exercise, have them trade with a partner (a different set if they worked in pairs) to evaluate their schedule.

Ok now take some time to evaluate each other's schedule. Refer to the slide for topics to review.

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.