

# CADET GREAT START

## Quick Program Guide



CAPP 60-21

April 2026

**PROGRAM**

**PREPARATION**

**OPEN HOUSE**

**OPERATIONS**



# CIVIL AIR PATROL

**About this guide.** The Great Start pamphlet you're holding is a handy quick guide designed to help you get started with the program. It provides you with essential information, tips, and instructions to jumpstart your new cadet onboarding journey. For the full program including detailed explanations, comprehensive lesson plans, materials lists, and additional resources, visit the Great Start website at [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart).

## 1. PROGRAM

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Motivate prospective cadets to join CAP
2. Introduce cadets to all 4 elements of the Cadet Program
3. Develop positive attitudes and teamwork
4. Increase retention through structured activities
5. Increase training effectiveness through a detailed curriculum guide

### GREAT START VISION

Transforming Youth into Cadet Airmen, providing a strong foundation in all aspects of cadet life, leading to a successful first year as a cadet.

### PROGRAM GOAL

Enable youth to succeed as CAP cadets by providing a comprehensive and fun introduction to all facets of cadet life

### PROGRAM FORMAT

This course is designed for use at the squadron level, with most of the activities taking place during weekly squadron meetings over an eight-week period. During these meetings, cadets engage in a variety of activities aimed at providing comprehensive training. Additionally, the program includes a designated Saturday "Field Day," where cadets participate in intensive training sessions for a full day.

Alternative schedules are available to accommodate different squadron preferences. One option omits the Saturday Field Day, extending the curriculum over 11 weeks. Alternatively, squadrons may opt for an accelerated schedule that expedites the program's completion, with or without the Field Day component, for quicker integration into the squadron, albeit with fewer aerospace activities. Flexibility in program structure enables squadrons to tailor the Great Start experience to their specific needs and resources.

*See suggested schedule on pages 6-7.*

## PROJECT OFFICER

The leadership education officer is responsible for transforming prospective cadets into Cadet Airmen through the Cadet Great Start program. This includes launching the initial plans for Cadet Great Start, coordinating with other Cadet Programs Officers affected by the program, preparing the cadet cadre to take a leadership role as instructors and mentors, and serving as the unit's expert on the Cadet Great Start curriculum.

## CADET CADRE

Cadet NCOs and officers are essential to the success of this course. Ranking cadets, working under senior member supervision, should execute the majority of the lessons, activities, and mentoring. This allows the new cadets to learn from their peers and gives the cadre members a chance to demonstrate and practice their leadership skills. Specific training on instructional techniques and mentoring is included for the cadre 2-4 weeks before the Great Start course begins.

## TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

Great Start is meant to be fun, yet challenging. When working with prospective and new cadets who are not yet invested in CAP, it is crucial that their first experiences be positive. At the same time, cadets are attracted to the challenge represented by the uniform and the opportunity to develop self-discipline. Creating such a training environment requires maturity on the part of the cadet cadre, and the wisdom to understand how to challenge cadets in a positive way.

## MEMBERSHIP

It's important for families to know what CAP is like before joining. CAP recognizes this by requiring that all prospective cadets attend three meetings before they apply for membership. The Great Start schedule calls for prospective cadets to complete their online membership applications during weeks 3 or 4 so they're in eServices and able to fully participate in the Field Day.

### PROSPECTIVE CADETS MAY:

- Participate in classroom activities, including hands-on projects
- Do drill and ceremonies training
- Take part in basic fitness activities, like calisthenics and jogging\*
- Play low-impact field games or activities like rocketry, orienteering, volleyball, etc.

### PROSPECTIVE CADETS CANNOT:

- Participate in overnight activities
- Ride in CAP vehicles or aircraft
- Participate in physically rigorous activities like hiking and obstacle courses
- Take part in High-Adventure activities

*\* Be sure to discuss medical restrictions with cadet's family. Prospective cadets should not attempt the CPFT before they're full members and assigned to the appropriate fitness category.*

## 2. PREPARATION

### SCHEDULE SELECTION

It's best to plan for regular Great Start cohorts in your routine quarterly schedule planning, 2-4 times per year. The recommended schedule is eight weeks with one weekend field day. Alternate plans including longer and shorter programs. You may also adapt the schedule to meet the needs of your particular squadron. At a minimum, Great Start should be planned at least four weeks in advance to allow cadre selection and training and adequate time to advertise the Open House, but the farther out you plan, the better.

### CADRE SELECTION

Similarly, it's best to align your Great Start cadre selection with the regular staff selection process in use at the squadron, 2-4 times a year. See the Cadet Staff Handbook (CAPP 60-31) for more details.

### CADRE TRAINING

A cadet cadre training lesson plan is available. The lesson plan is designed to be taught 3-4 weeks before the start of the cohort by the leadership education officer or a cadet officer. Cadre will learn about their roles as mentors and trainers for new cadets, and the goals, content, and training methods of the Great Start Program.

### PROVISIONAL UNIFORMS

To ensure consistency it is recommended to designate the Squadron PT uniform as the provisional uniform for the Great Start cohort. This choice holds the advantage of continued use beyond the Great Start period. Alternate provisional uniforms include khakis, jeans or black pants with a black t-shirt or button-down shirt. Cadet cadre will wear their regular uniforms to serve as a visual example of proper wear. Note: even if your squadron has a uniform closet or if a cadet's family is able to purchase uniforms outright, we still recommend adhering to the provisional uniform for the Great Start cohort to maintain uniformity. See *CAPR 60-1*, 3.1.6.2 for more details.



## MATERIALS

Each lesson plan specifies the required materials, and we highly recommend creating a dedicated “kit” for each lesson that can be conveniently stored at the squadron building. This way the cadet cadre can simply grab the “uniform class bag” instead of having to gather materials anew for each session. Additionally, consider preprinting any necessary handouts for classes that require them. This approach ensures that the materials are readily available and reduces the hassle of repeated preparation.

## TECHNOLOGY

Some presentations and classes have accompanying videos and slides to supplement the content. Download these materials and test out the technology beforehand to ensure compatibility and proper functioning. If a projector or screen is unavailable, prepare for an alternative mode of presentation, such as a whiteboard or printed handouts to ensure that all participants have access to the information.

## GUEST SPEAKERS

Guest speakers are recommended for certain classes to enhance the learning experience and provide valuable insights. Once you have identified a potential speaker, reach out to them and provide them with the class outline and the scheduled time and date. Remember to follow up with the speaker the week before their scheduled appearance to ensure they are well-prepared and have any necessary materials. A friendly reminder the day before their presentation can also be helpful.

## ORIENTATION FLIGHTS

As flying is the number one reason why new cadets join CAP, we highly encourage getting the new Airmen on an Orientation Flight as soon as possible after graduation. This experience serves as a fantastic capstone activity, offering a tangible reward for their hard work and motivation to continue on with the Cadet Program. To arrange, please coordinate with your Wing Orientation Flight Coordinator. Uniform requirements and more information at [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/OFlights](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/OFlights).





# Great Start Program at a Glance

April 2026

## Great Start Vision

Transforming youth into Cadet Airmen, providing a strong foundation in all aspects of cadet life, leading to a successful first year as a cadet

## Great Start Objectives

1. Motivate prospective cadets to join CAP
2. Introduce cadets to all 4 elements of the Cadet Program
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## Preplan

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Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Field Da
Opening Formation			Saturday bet
3.3 Drill 1 (30)	3.3 Drill 2 (30)	6.1 The Cadet Oath (30)	weeks 4 &
3.5 Customs & Courtesies (45)	2.1 Cadet Wingman Course (45)	3.1 Followership (45)	3.3 Drill 3 (30)
Break			3.4 Chain of Comm
3.2 TLP 1 (30)	4.2 Aerospace (30)	3.2 TLP 2 (30)	2.4 Field Safety (15)
Closing Formation			2.5 Compass Course
New families may arrive. Give quick cadet membership, parent's introduction, and Great Start overview during Drill 1.	Complete membership applications with parents during Drill 2.	First week of membership.  Homework: Cadets log into eServices, complete Welcome Course in Absorb & start memorizing Cadet Oath	4.1 Survival on the I
			3.6 The Cadet Unif
			3.7 Grade Insignia (
			5.1 Intro to Fitness
			5.2 CPFT Practice (2
			5.3 Fitness Activity
			6.2 Character Role I

**More Information at :**

**[www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart)**

## Planning

Weeks out:

Event dates

advertise Open House

Schedule Orientation Flights for the weekend after Week 8 of Great Start (if available)

Weeks out:

1. Cadet Cadre Training

## Open House- Week 1

Welcome Guests

1.1 Exciting Opportunities (30-45)

1.2 Cadet Membership (20)

1.3 Teambuilding: Mine Field (30) \*

1.4 Parent's Introduction (30) \*

1.5 Great Start Overview (15)

\* concurrent activities

Day	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
between	Opening Formation			
Days 4 & 5	5.4 CPFT (45-60)	3.3 Drill 4 (30)	3.6 Uniform Tutorial (30)	Promotion Ceremony & Social (30-45)
Command (30)	2.3 Goal Setting (20)	3.9 Cadet Expectations (45)	3.12 Feedback Meetings (45)	3.8 Cadet Progression (45)
Course (15)	Break			
Course (70)	3.10 Jeopardy Curry Review (30)	Squadron's Choice	4.2 Aerospace (30)	Squadron's Choice
the Moon (40)	Closing Formation			
Uniform (30)	Homework: Cadets complete 3.11 Leadership Ch. 1 Cadet Inter-active or test at home	Cadet Welcome Kits arrive.	Complete promotions in eServices as cadets complete the requirements.	Recommended: Capstone event
India (15)				
ness (30)				
ce (20)				
ivity (40)				
tole Model (45)				

## 3. OPEN HOUSE

### PLANNING

The Squadron Open House should be part of your yearly planning cycle. It can be helpful to plan for an Open House after an event, like a big airshow at your local airport. This way you can hand out flyers at the squadron booth and people will know to come the next week if they're interested. You might also look at something like a summer encampment and plan backwards. If your wing's encampment will be in June, you might look forward three to four months and schedule an Open House for February or March. Be sure to look at the Open House schedule and prepare for the presentations and activities you'll be featuring.

### PUBLICITY

To get people in the door, you'll need to reach out to the community and let them know who you are and what CAP and your squadron offers. Consider recruiting booths at local events, reaching out to local middle and high schools, local paper or radio stations, social media and flyers. See [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/Recruiting](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/Recruiting) for more.

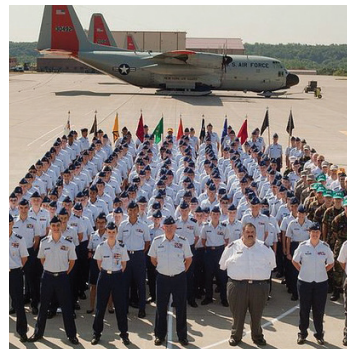
### HOSTING

Once the big day arrives it's show time!

- Interesting **static displays** can be great conversation starters. Consider displaying awards the squadron has won, pictures from recent activities, and other items that demonstrate what the squadron is all about.
- **Greeters & Refreshments** can make visitors feel welcome right away.
- Show your guests what cadet membership looks like with a **squadron slide show**.
- Be sure to have a **sign-in sheet** to capture contact info and follow up with interested parties.
- Find detailed **lesson plans** for Open House presentations and activities at [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart).

### FOLLOW UP

After the Open House, be sure to follow up with the guests via email or a phone call during the next week. If someone's age (under 12) or immediately upcoming schedule won't allow them to participate in this Great Start cycle, make a note to invite them to future Open Houses/cohorts.



## 4. GREAT START OPERATIONS

### Letter to Cadre

As the primary instructors for Great Start, soon new cadets will be looking up to you as their leaders and mentors as they start to learn about the CAP Cadet Program. You'll be the ones to guide them through the first steps in their cadet careers and set the tone for their CAP journey. Take the opportunity to share what you love most about the program, put your leadership skills into action, and inspire the next generation of cadets.

Remember, you are not alone in this endeavor. If you find yourself in need of assistance, guidance, or support, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your squadron leaders are there to help you succeed and ensure that you have the resources you need to deliver a top-notch experience for our new cadets.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to this crucial role. We have every confidence that you will rise to the occasion and deliver an unforgettable experience for our new cadets that sets them on the path to success.

-The National Cadet Team

### New Cadet Guide

The *New Cadet Guide* (CAPP 60-20) is the primary textbook for the Great Start program. Cadets will receive their own copies around week 6. The unit may want to have a set of "loaners" on hand to use in the meantime, available from Vanguard. Be sure to check [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/NewCadet](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/NewCadet) to make sure you're using the most up-to-date version.

### Communication

It's critical to keep in touch with the Great Start cohort. Ensure that you collect their contact details, including email addresses and phone numbers, to establish clear lines of communication. Develop a well-defined communication plan to ensure that everyone is on the same page and that information flows smoothly. Regular updates, reminders, and clear instructions will contribute to a seamless and organized Great Start program.

## CADETS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Civil Air Patrol wholeheartedly welcomes all interested youth to be part of our Cadet Program, including those with disabilities and special needs who may require accommodations. CAP is an environment where every cadet can thrive. It is crucial for squadron leaders to engage with prospective cadets and their parents to understand their unique needs and how we can best support them. If a new or prospective cadet's needs feel too great, be sure to reach out to [cadets@capnhq.gov](mailto:cadets@capnhq.gov) to consult with a learning specialist before you turn them away. Thank you for creating a supportive environment for all cadets, ensuring that everyone can fully participate and benefit from the CAP Cadet Program.

## LESSON PLANS

Comprehensive lesson plans and schedules for all Great Start classes can be found at [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart).

Lesson plans should be assigned to cadre members prior to or during the cadre training class to allow adequate time to familiarize themselves with the content and teaching objectives. "Check Rides" are recommended, particularly for cadets with less instructional experience. See *CAPP 60-11, CP Officer Handbook*, 3.11 for more on the Check-ride system.

## WEEKLY DEBRIEF

After each meeting during the Great Start Program, have a quick debrief session to reflect on the evening's progress, identify areas for improvement, and prepare for the upcoming week. Ensure that the assigned lessons are clearly communicated and that there is a solid plan in place to gather the necessary materials and resources for the next week's activities.

## FIELD DAY

A highlight of the Great Start program is the Saturday field day, taking place between weeks 4 and 5. The field day offers a unique opportunity for cadets to engage in hands-on experiences and team-building exercises, fostering camaraderie and personal growth. It is recommended to invite additional cadets and seniors who can offer support and supervision during the activities. Be sure to plan for and communicate lunch arrangements in advance, informing cadets to bring their own food or money for a group option like pizza.



## PROMOTION CEREMONY

Cadets who have completed the Curry Achievement are recognized in a promotion ceremony in Week 8. The new Airmen are not yet in uniform, which prevents the traditional insignia pinning. The presentation of certificates is recommended as a symbol of recognition for their hard work throughout the program. This allows us to honor their accomplishments and provide a tangible reminder of their successful completion of the Great Start journey. Certificates are available for printing at [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/Library](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/Library) and in the Administration module under CAP Certificates.

## AWARDS

Awards play a significant role in the Great Start program, providing a wonderful opportunity to showcase and model recognition for outstanding achievements. Awards may include recognizing the Most Outstanding Performance in Drill, the cadet with the Highest Score on the Written Exam, the cadet demonstrating the Most Outstanding Performance in Physical Fitness, the Honor Cadet who embodies the values of the program, and the Most Outstanding Instructor from the cadet cadre.

## CURRY UNIFORM VOUCHERS

Within 5 days of officially completing Achievement 1, cadets receive an email from Vanguard containing their uniform voucher information. Vouchers take the form of a credit at our uniform partner, Vanguard. Voucher amounts are determined based on the family's financial need as declared in the membership application and vary between \$75 and \$175. Some families may opt out of participating in the program. Curry Uniform Vouchers expire 45 days after issuance. Vouchers are not renewable and are not transferrable, so be sure cadets are watching for their vouchers and taking advantage of them. See [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/CurryUniform](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/CurryUniform) for more information.

## DELAYED CADETS

Occasionally you may have a prospective cadet who's not willing to join after week 3, is missing meetings, or is only attending due to parental pressure. The CAP Cadet Program is fully voluntary, and if a cadet is unwilling to participate it's best to respect that decision and not have them join at this time. Take their contact information and inform them about future opportunities or alternative programs that may better align with their interests and goals.

## PREPARING FOR NEXT TIME

The leadership education officer should have students and cadre complete an end-of-course critique. Review the critiques to learn how to improve the course for next time. If you have comments or suggestions for how to improve the program, email [cadets@capnhq.gov](mailto:cadets@capnhq.gov).



Questions about something not covered  
in the Quick Guide? There's a lot more at

**[www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com/GreatStart)**

Reach out with your questions or feedback to  
**[cadets@capnhq.gov](mailto:cadets@capnhq.gov)**