

CIVIL AIR PATROL

NATIONAL CHARACTER DAY

CURRICULUM GUIDE



2011

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1. PROGRAM GOALS

National Character Day is the CAP cadet's opportunity to learn why their moral character will play a part in shaping their future. During National Character Day activities, CAP showcases its commitment in helping cadets develop a personal code of honor. Specifically, National Character Day pursues two main goals:

- (1) To motivate cadets to take issues of character and honor seriously, and to commit themselves to the drug-free ethic.
- (2) To further integrate the Drug Demand Reduction program into CAP's overall Cadet Program.

2. ACTIVITY CONTENT

To achieve its program goals, National Character Day consists of three elements:

Academic Element

The academic element begins with an informal presentation on the Air Force Academy's ARDA model, which offers cadets a way of engaging the world as leaders of character. Cadets use the ARDA model to place their learning in context throughout the National Character Day activities. See Attachment 1 for a lesson plan.

The academic element's core event is a presentation by a distinguished guest speaker. The presenter may be a professional athlete, political leader, famous actor, astronaut, decorated soldier, business executive, noted author, or any compelling figure who can command the cadets' attention and share an important message about character, to include their promoting the drug-free ethic. See Attachment 2 for a suggested letter of invitation. A 20 to 30 minute talk followed by 20 minutes of Q&A and/or book signings and photographs is recommended.

After the guest speaker departs, the academic element concludes with journaling and a group discussion where the cadets consider the speaker's message and relate it to their own lives and journeys as aspiring leaders. See the *National Character Day Cadet Handbook* and Attachment 3 for a journaling and discussion guide. Note that depending on the number of participants, it may be useful to break the cadets into small groups.

Experiential Element

The second half of National Character Day is a hands-on Character Challenge that forces cadets to step outside their normal comfort zone. Depending on local resources, cadets might participate in a low ropes course, climb a rock wall, rappel, skydive in an indoor wind tunnel, fire weapons at a shooting range, tackle an obstacle course, or engage in a similar crucible requiring a youth-sized dose of courage. This hands-on activity serves as both a draw to the overall National Character Day program, and as a surreptitious way for the cadre to bring home the drug-free message. DDR funding may be available; see Section 4 - Implementation Guidelines.

CHARACTER CHALLENGE
Suggested Activities

- Low Ropes Course
- Climbing Wall
- Tethered Ballooning
- Rappelling
- Indoor Skydiving
- Rifle / Pistol Range
- Obstacle Course

Synthesis Element

To bring home the day’s teachings, cadets conclude with a second journaling exercise and group discussion. The synthesis element is essentially a “hot wash” where the staff challenges the cadets to put the day’s experiences into perspective and recommit to the Core Values and the drug-free ethic. To showcase the cadet perspective, the cadet commander should deliver brief but prepared remarks that charge the participants with applying what they’ve learned. See the *National Character Day Cadet Handbook* and Attachment 4 for the journaling exercise and discussion guide.

Drug-Free Ethic

National Character Day emphasizes the drug-free ethic in at least four instances during the program: (1) the guest speaker’s presentation, (2) discussion I, (3) discussion II, and (4) during the cadet commander’s charge.

Sample Agenda

With National Character Day consisting of three main elements, a sample schedule will look something like this:

INTRODUCTION	EXPERIENTIAL ELEMENT
0830 Arrival & Sign-In	<i>(duration depends on group size & activity type)</i>
0845 Director & Cadet Commander Welcome	1200 Safety Briefing & Instructions
	1215 Character Challenge
ACADEMIC ELEMENT	SYNTHESIS ELEMENT
0900 The Air Force Academy ARDA Model	1400 Journaling II
0930 Guest Speaker	1415 Group Discussion II
1030 Journaling I	
1045 Group Discussion I	CONCLUSION
LUNCH	1430 Cadet Commander’s Charge
1115 Bag or Catered	1445 Activity Critiques
<i>If necessary, travel to Character Challenge facility</i>	1450 Presentation of Certificates
	1500 Dismissal

3. OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Wing-Level Activity. National Character Day is envisioned as a wing-level program, though geographically large wings are welcome to operate the activity on the group level.

Half-Day Duration. The activity is designed to be about five hours' duration, depending on group size, travel requirements between the speaker's auditorium and the location of the hands-on Character Challenge, and the nature of the hands-on challenge itself.

Decentralized Program. Although a nation-wide program, National Character Day is planned and conducted at the wing level, by local Cadet Program leaders, using local resources. Wings are asked to conduct National Character Day during the month of September.

4. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Staffing. The wing director of cadet programs selects the activity director, with the wing commander's approval.

Activity Director. The activity director is the senior member who is responsible for the overall planning and safe execution of the National Character Day program for the wing.

Other staff positions suggested for the activity include:

Deputy Director, Academics. This senior member nominates a guest speaker, and upon the director's approval, invites the potential speaker and coordinates the necessary logistical arrangements. He or she also assists the cadet commander in making the Air Force Academy ARDA Model presentation, introduces the journaling exercises, and facilitates group discussions.

Deputy Director, Character Challenge. This senior member nominates a hands-on activity for the Character Challenge, and upon the director's approval, approaches the potential host agency to request support and to coordinate the logistical arrangements. He or she also works with the host agency experts to ensure they deliver an adequate safety briefing to the cadets.

Executive Officer. This senior member manages the cadet registration process, develops rosters of participating cadets, maintains a budget, collects cadet activity fees (if needed), coordinates transportation between the academic and Character Challenge facilities, coordinates the catered lunch (if desired), and submits reimbursement requests to National Headquarters. Depending on group size, this officer may require senior and/or cadet staff assistants.

Public Affairs Officer. This senior member prepares press releases and coordinates visits by local media covering the National Character Day program.

Cadet Commander. This cadet officer is the participating cadets' focal point throughout National Character Day. He or she assists the senior staff in selecting the guest speaker and the Character Challenge. He or she delivers the Air Force Academy ARDA presentation, under the

guidance of the deputy for academics. Further, he or she prepares and delivers a 5 to 10 minute address charging the participating cadets to apply what they learned during National Character Day. The cadet commander provides general supervision of all participating cadets. And finally, the cadet commander submits a detailed after action report to the director shortly after the conclusion of National Character Day.

Cadet Deputy Commander. This cadet officer assists the senior staff in selecting the guest speaker and Character Challenge. He or she serves as the guest speaker's escort officer and formally introduces the guest speaker to the assembled cadets. During the Character Challenge, this cadet functions as a cadet safety officer, assisting the deputy director in ensuring all cadets follow the instructions and safety protocols. Throughout National Character Day, he or she assists the cadet commander with general supervision of the participating cadets. Finally, he or she assists the cadet commander in developing an after action report.

Additional cadet and senior staff may be needed as flight commanders and field training officers, respectively, depending on the group size.

Materials. Activity directors should request copies of the *National Character Day Cadet Handbook* and this *Curriculum Guide* by emailing ddr@capnhq.gov. Please allow up to 2 to 3 weeks for delivery.

Funding. National Headquarters provides financial support to wings that conduct National Character Day via a reimbursement process using CAPF 108. Funding is limited to 80% of the wing's cost for the Character Challenge portion of the program, to include transportation costs. Speaker honorariums, food, and lodging are not eligible for reimbursement. To qualify for funding, wings must submit their request to National Headquarters using Attachment 7 at least 8 weeks prior to the event. Wings may need to provide a subsidy and/or charge cadets an activity fee to cover the expenses over and above the DDR funding.

Safety. Activity directors are reminded to adhere to all guidelines in CAPR 52-16, *Cadet Program Management*, regarding high adventure activities.

Facility Needs. Two facilities are likely to be needed for National Character Day.

First, an auditorium or classroom will be needed for the academic element. If the guest speaker plans to use audio visuals, a computer and projector and perhaps a microphone may be needed as well. Depending on group size, it may be useful to have access to multiple classrooms for the journaling and group discussion activities.

Second, the Character Challenge will no doubt require a special facility for rappelling, indoor skydiving, firearms training, or whatever the case may be.

Therefore, the activity director needs to consider the logistical challenges involved in moving cadets from the academic facility to the Character Challenge facility, and if necessary, back to the academic facility.

Public Affairs. National Character Day is a tremendous public affairs opportunity. The PAO is encouraged to coordinate media coverage and issue a press release.

Uniform of the Day. BDUs or equivalent is the recommended uniform of the day, due to physical nature of the Character Challenge activity.

Planning Timeline. A helpful planning timeline is included at Attachment 6.

Activity Critique. A critique form is found in Attachment 7. National Headquarters provides hard copies when it mails the Cadet Handbook and Certificates of Accomplishment. The activity staff should review the cadets' critiques before they develop an after action report. Wings are asked to forward copies of the critiques to National Headquarters when they submit their reimbursement requests.

Suggested Equipment List

Microphone (if group size warrants)

Computer and projector (if needed by guest speaker)

National Character Day - Cadet Handbook (request one per cadet from ddr@capnhq.gov)

Certificates of Accomplishment (included with *Cadet Handbook* request)

Water and cups (for Character Challenge)

Thank You gift to speaker (\$50 maximum recommended)



ATTACHMENT 1

U.S. Air Force Academy ARDA Model - Lesson Plan

Learning Objectives.

1. Defend the idea that by actively using brainpower, nearly every experience becomes an opportunity to learn about leadership and character.
2. Identify the 5-steps of the US Air Force Academy's "ARDA" model.
3. Explain what each step in "ARDA" means, in your own words.
4. Commit to trying the ARDA approach during Character Day's activities.

Lesson Format. Informal lecture with audience participation

Lesson Duration. 20 to 30 minutes

Materials Needed.

National Character Day – Cadet Handbook

Whiteboard and markers, or computer, projector, screen, and powerpoint

Photo / image of someone engaged in the Character Challenge activity

ATTENTION 1 min

Show a picture of someone participating in the Character Challenge. If necessary, use a stock photo from Google image search. For our purposes here, it's not important that the person in the photo be a cadet, but simply show someone doing the same activity as the Character Challenge.

Q: What can be learned here?

Replies: Acknowledge any good response. See if anyone addresses character or leadership related learning.

INTRODUCTION 2 min

As cadets, we're always encountering cool new experiences. One day you're flying, another day you're posting the colors, another day you're meeting Air Force officers, and another day you're tackling an obstacle course.

Each experience, no matter what it is, affords us a chance to learn about leadership and character. But you can't just sit back and let stuff happen to you, you have to reflect. You have to use brainpower and really consider what it is you're learning.

How do you do that?

The U.S. Air Force Academy says we need to “engage with the world as potential leaders and people of character.” The Academy recommends using the ARDA model:

Awareness
Reasoning
Decision
Action

(Write the ARDA acronym on a white board or powerpoint slide, and restate it for effect.)

OVERVIEW 1 min

For the next twenty to thirty minutes, we’ll look at the ARDA model and learn how we can use it to help us become leaders of character. The goal is to gain a tool we can use to make every experience a chance to develop leadership skill and character. You’ll want to follow along by turning to the ARDA diagram in your *National Character Day Cadet Handbook*.

MAIN POINT #1 4 min

Awareness *it may be helpful to write “Awareness” on the whiteboard or powerpoint*

As you enter a new experience, work on your *awareness*. Ask yourself, Is this an ethical situation? A moment for leadership?

Awareness means not passively going through life with an empty mind. As you encounter a new experience, actively search for the opportunity to learn about ethics and leadership. Ask yourself, What might this new experience teach me?

Examples:

(A) You’re about to hold a belay line in rappelling
(Ask the cadets to identify some lessons rappelling teaches about ethics and about leadership.)

Replies:

Ethics: concentration, sobriety, being responsible for another person’s physical safety; dire consequences for another if I fail in my duty

Leadership: encouragement, emotional support, camaraderie, etc.

(B) You’re preflighting an aircraft for the first time as a student pilot

(Ask the cadets to identify some lessons that preflighting an aircraft teaches about ethics and about leadership.)

Replies:

Ethics: being responsible for your own and your instructor's physical safety; stewardship of an expensive aircraft that you do not own; developing the good habit of thoroughness as an airman; duty to be sober and drug-free, etc.; dire consequences for another if I fail in my duty

Leadership: opportunity for self-reliance, opportunity to show attention to detail, opportunity for personal development, reminder that hard work pays off.

(C) Through CAP, you meet with your U.S. Senator

(Ask the cadets to identify some lessons that meeting with a senator teaches about ethics and about leadership.)

Replies:

Ethics: begin to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic-republic; duty to represent yourself and CAP in a positive manner; duty to listen well and not prejudge the senator, especially if you usually disagree with his or her platform; etc.

Leadership: opportunity to learn about government and public service; opportunity to show good interpersonal skills as you interact with a dignitary; test of your verbal communication skills; etc.

MAIN POINT #2 4 min

Reasoning *it may be helpful to write "Reasoning" on the whiteboard or powerpoint*

You've identified some ways you might learn about character and leadership. Next, you bring your reasoning to bear. Ask yourself, what do I need to consider as I try to select the best course of action, based on my values, experiences, commitments, etc.?

Who are the stake holders? Who will be affected by my decision?

What obligations do I have to my team? To family, friends, teachers, etc?

What could go wrong here, and how disastrous would the consequences be?

What is motivating the other people involved in this situation? Are their motives pure?

What positive and negative effects could result in the *short term* from this experience?

What positive and negative effects could result in the *long term* from this experience?

Who, if anyone, should I consult before making a decision?

Example: *You had never considered taking a "gap year" between high school and college until you heard that Europeans consider it a normal and respectable thing to do. You sit through a presentation by a company that markets widgets to people from its call center in the Caribbean. The presenter is recruiting*

management interns for the coming year. Those selected will receive free room and board, plus a \$3,000 stipend, paid at year's end. With nine other young adults you'd share a home that is just three miles from the beach and one mile from the call center where you'll work. The presenter tells you this is a great opportunity to have fun for a year while living someplace exotic. You'll have time to figure out what you want to do, gain valuable work experience, develop new skills in the process, and more.

Q: Tell me how you reason through the ethical and leadership issues in the opportunity I just described.

Replies:

Who are the stakeholders? Mom and dad, you, the company.

What obligations do you already have?

What could go wrong? You haven't seen the living arrangements; the pay is meager and comes at year's end; if you don't like the situation, you're a long way from home.

What is motivating the people involved? They're a for-profit company; they may want to obtain cheap labor; maybe they're located overseas so as to escape normal labor laws.

What are the short term pros & cons? Lots of fun, chance to take a break before college, chance to do something different; cons were mentioned above.

What are the long term pros & cons? The experience could help you focus, rejuvenate, and prepare for college; the year off might turn into two and then three years off, derailing college plans.

Who should I consult? Mom and dad; ask to talk with alumni of the program; talk with a guidance counselor at school to see if he or she is familiar with similar gap year programs.

MAIN POINT #3 4 min

Decision *it may be helpful to write "Decision" on the whiteboard or powerpoint*

It's never enough to think through a problem, you have to decide where you stand. Some philosophers call this the paradox of freedom. We're free to make choices, but we're not free *not to choose*. Not choosing is itself a choice.

As you make your decision, ask yourself, What do I intend to do? And, Does my decision align with the kind of person or leader I want to be?

Q: Can you think of a time when your decision-making skills saved you from doing something that didn't align with the kind of person you want to be?

Replies:

Acknowledge any reply that is on point. Look for opportunities to emphasize the idea that good leaders think through the character aspects of problems.

MAIN POINT #4 2 min

The Decision - Action Gap *it may be helpful to write "The Gap" on the whiteboard or powerpoint*

What does it take to convert a decision to an action? Some of us are good at the Nike approach: "Just Do It." But "Just Do It" is too simplistic for big goals. Getting started is one thing, but following through is another.

The Academy's ARDA model acknowledges that there is a challenge or a gap between making a decision and acting on that decision all the way to completion.

You might ask yourself, Do I have the self-discipline and courage to overcome pressures, fears, and doubts?

For example, suppose you've made a decision to apply for AFROTC. But in your quest to earn a AFROTC scholarship, let's say your challenge will be grades. Therefore, you reason that to bridge the "decision - action gap" you'll have to work real hard on your self-discipline every day for several weeks, months, or even a few years to keep your grades way up. You'll have to establish a routine that puts your homework and study habits first in your life.

MAIN POINT #5 4 min

Action *it may be helpful to write "Action" on the whiteboard or powerpoint*

You're acting on your goals and dreams. But are your actions consistent with being a leader of character?

This is where you take a good hard look at yourself and what you're doing with your life. Nobody's perfect. But can you respect yourself? Can you take pride in your actions? If not, something has to change.

Ever know someone who thinks they are really smart or really funny or a superb leader, when in fact they're absolutely not that? That person has a "blind spot." They are "blind" to a part of their character and cannot see themselves for who they really are.

Q: Can you think of a time when you or someone you know has taken a good look at their actions and discovered a blind spot?

Replies:

Acknowledge any reply that is on point. Emphasize replies that talk about personal reflection.

SUMMARY 1 min

In summary, hard-charging leaders take initiative by applying their brainpower every chance they get. If you keep your mind active, you'll find that nearly every experience offers you a chance to learn about leadership and character. The ARDA model – Awareness, Reasoning, Decision, and Action – is a way to guide you during Character Day and beyond.

MOTIVATION 1 min

Today we'll be hearing from an incredible guest speaker (name, description), and taking part in an awesome Character Challenge (describe).

The Air Force Academy's advice to us as cadets is to use ARDA to recognize, reason, decide, and act as we live through new experiences.

CLOSING 1 min

Let's hear you sound off after me:

Awareness	<i>Awareness</i>
Reasoning	<i>Reasoning</i>
Decision	<i>Decision</i>
Action	<i>Action</i>

Integrity	<i>Integrity</i>
Service	<i>Service</i>
Excellence	<i>Excellence</i>
Respect	<i>Respect</i>

ATTACHMENT 2

Sample Letter of Invitation

[CAP Letterhead with contact information]

Date

Dear Famous Person,

Civil Air Patrol needs your help to teach teenagers why character matters. Because you're a great role model for youth, we invite you to make a difference by speaking with 100 cadets on date at location.

Civil Air Patrol is a non-profit that uses its teenaged cadets' interest in aviation to develop their leadership skills and transform them into responsible citizens. Today's cadets are tomorrow's aerospace leaders.

We ask for your help with our National Character Day effort. Would you be available to address the cadets for 20 to 30 minutes? What have you learned about character over the course of your career? What role does your character or code of honor play in your life? We want our cadets to see that matters of character, integrity, self-discipline, and a drug-free ethic are truly important.

We're not asking you to make a formal speech, but simply to talk with the cadets, to share some anecdotes, some personal observations or life stories that highlight what you've learned about character, responsibility, and integrity.

I will follow up with you or your staff in a few days via telephone. Meanwhile, please browse the enclosed brochure to get a sense for what drives our cadets. Thank you.

Sincerely,

JOHN CURRY, Major, CAP
Project Officer, National Character Day

Enclosure: Today's Cadets

ATTACHMENT 3

Discussion Guide I

First, have the cadets spend 10 minutes quietly reflecting on the guest speaker's message and recording their thoughts in the journal portion of the Cadet Handbook.

Then, use these or similar open-ended questions to lead a discussion about the guest speaker's remarks.

What were some of the speaker's main points? *(One at a time, make a running tally on the board)*

Have you ever seen somebody try to put one of the speaker's ideas into practice? What happened?

What was the most powerful thing you heard or saw? Why?

Did the speaker's remarks relate to the Core Values at all? Which ones? How?

How might you apply the speaker's advice in your own life?

ATTACHMENT 4

Discussion Guide II

First, have the cadets spend 10 minutes quietly reflecting on the Character Challenge activity and recording their thoughts in the journal portion of the Cadet Handbook.

Then, use these or similar open-ended questions to lead a discussion about the Character Challenge activity.

What does it take to succeed at this activity? (ie: to succeed at rappelling, at the rock wall, or whatever the case may be)

Is it possible to get hurt at this activity? How? And how would drugs or alcohol affect your performance during this activity?

What does this activity really teach us? What are some of the leadership and character traits on display at this activity?

What was the most powerful thing you heard or saw during the activity?

Is it important to challenge yourself in regards to leadership? To character? Why?

Attachment 6. Planning Timeline.

	10 weeks prior	8 weeks prior	6 weeks prior	1 week prior	CHARACTER DAY	1 or 2 weeks after
National Headquarters			Processes wing's DDR funding request			Receives after action report final draft
Wing DCP & Wing Commander	Select an activity director				Attends Character Day, if able	Reviews after action report final draft
Activity Director	Recruits a senior and cadet staff	Selects the guest speaker and the Character Challenge activity Approves the activity budget	Determines activity date based on speaker and character challenge availability Announces National Character Day using all available channels	Monitors coordination with guest speaker and character challenge agency	Provide for the safe and successful execution of the National Character Day program	Reviews, edits (if necessary) and endorses after action report final draft
Executive Officer		Prepares a budget for director's approval Submits funding request to NHQ (Attachment 7)	Manages cadet registration process Receives NHQ's approval of DDR funding request	Coordinates transportation needs and resources Coordinates for catered lunch (if desired)	Ensures fulfillment of mission support and administrative needs	Submits receipts and CAPF 108 to NHQ for reimbursement Reviews after action report; submits to NHQ
Deputy for Academics		Requests support from potential guest speaker; coordinates logistical support		Mentors cadet commander in ARDA preparations; prepares for group discussions	Ensures success of academic element	Reviews draft after action report
Deputy for Character Challenge		Requests support from potential Character Challenge agency; coordinates logistical support			Ensures success of Character Challenge & monitors safety	Reviews draft after action report
Public Affairs Officer			Prepares and publishes a press release; invites local media to attend program		Escorts media and arranges interviews	Reviews draft after action report
Cadet Commander		Assists with guest speaker and character challenge arrangements	Prepares commencement address		Leads cadets in fulfillment of program Delivers concluding "charge"	Prepares draft after action report
Cadet Deputy Commander		Assists with guest speaker and character challenge arrangements	Prepares formal introduction of guest speaker		Leads cadets in fulfillment of program Escorts and introduces guest speaker	Assists with drafting after action report

ATTACHMENT 7

National Character Day - Activity Critique

Cadets: Please help both local and national Cadet Programs leaders improve National Character Day for next year. This critique is anonymous, so honestly tell us your thoughts. Thank you.

Put an X in the appropriate space to mark your response.

Wing:	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Guest Speaker:					
Character Challenge: ie: "marksmanship training"					
1. The guest speaker was interesting.					
2. The guest speaker taught me something valuable about leadership and character.					
3. The "Character Challenge" activity was exciting and pushed most cadets out of their comfort zone.					
4. The "Character Challenge" taught me something valuable about leadership and character.					
5. National Character Day was well-organized.					
6. The staff was helpful and well-prepared.					
7. Overall, I would recommend National Character Day to a friend.					

Personal Comments: