Communication Fundamentals

Lesson Objective: Demonstrate effective communication knowledge and skill both in verbal and written formats.

Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):

1. Demonstrate the ability to create an effective presentation.
2. Demonstrate the ability to speak effectively in at least two CAP related settings.
3. Demonstrate the ability to write effectively in at least three CAP related formats.

Scheduled Lesson Time: 2 hours 10 minutes

Introduction

“Effective, uhh, comm, uhh communication, uh is real important uhh, uhh in uhh, you know, getting your uhh point across to uhh your audience.” Imagine being in the audience of someone who spoke like that. If you didn’t tune out after the second “uhh,” you surely wouldn’t be paying attention after the second sentence that person spoke. Several other things would be going on simultaneously at this point: you would probably have lost all respect for the speaker; you would be texting your displeasure at the speaker’s lack of ability to your best friend; you would be thinking of ways to get your money back, and planning to never listen to this person again; and you would be waiting for the first opportunity to make your exit. No matter how intelligent this speaker is, how cutting edge or critically important the information may be, this speaker has lost your interest due to ineffective communication. Choosing the right method to communicate what you need communicated is equally important. How often have you been to a “Death by Powerpoint” presentation? How many meetings have you attended that (in your opinion) where the communication would have been more effective and far less wasteful of your (and the other 20 people’s) time if only a 5 sentence e-mail had been sent?

Some speakers get their points across better with stories, while others use only short bits of information. Which is “better?” Neither, of course. Each is a tool and every tool has a proper use. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages. Proper preparation is necessary for either method to ensure your audience receives the message you are trying to send. In order to achieve your desired goals as a CAP commander, you must communicate effectively. Effective communication plays a significantly critical role in building the foundation of your credibility and ultimately positions you for the success of your unit’s endeavors.

Written correspondence (LOL!) will also give your reader (audience) an impression. OMG! Really? What impression do you wish to convey? Using internet shorthand can lead you into trouble, especially if there are multiple interpretations for that abbreviation, or if your reader is unfamiliar with the abbreviation you used. Accidentally offending someone requires a lot of effort to cleanup and still leaves a bad first impression of your credibility and professionalism.

What’s the bottom line when communicating? Use plain language in a professional manner. Luckily for us, there are some excellent resources available for us in CAP. A few of these will be listed in the appendix for your convenience.
This lesson is meant to be an exercise to teach you how to get your point across effectively. In contrast to many lessons, practice is where your learning will take place. Reading a few paragraphs won’t give you the expertise you will need as a squadron commander. Writing a memorandum and a letter to be scrutinized and handed back to you is one way to see how someone else may be interpreting what you write. Practicing your speeches in front of your classmates will give you experience that can help boost your confidence and let you know that you are not alone in this arena (your classmates will make mistakes, too).

With exposure to various presentation styles, you will get a chance to pick and choose what best suits your personality and style of presentation. Use YOUR personality and style to get your message across effectively and professionally. One bit of advice: if most people don’t usually find your sense of humor funny, don’t attempt to be funny…the silence will be deafening, and some in your audience may find it insulting.

**EXERCISE:** The remainder of this reading contains the instructions and requirements for the exercise. You will be expected to turn in these products as completed assignments to your instructor according to the instructions provided to you by the instructor. Be prepared to share your products with your classmates and to discuss in class. This is a mandatory activity.

1. Creating an effective presentation. Each student will create an effective presentation on a CAP topic and be prepared to share it at the UCC.

Assuming the local commander (CC) or professional development officer (PDO) has already taken UCC, this should be a written task that is evaluated and approved by the local CC or PDO. Once approved by the local CC or PDO, the student should proceed with the presentation and practice at the local level. When it is time for the Unit Commander’s Course (UCC), the student will bring the written plan and be prepared to deliver the presentation. The UCC staff will evaluate the presentation as a “second opinion.” If the delivery of the talk or paper is appropriate, the student will have accomplished several things simultaneously:

   * Demonstrated the creation of an effective presentation
   * Demonstrated the ability to effectively communicate
   * Taught other students how to do both of the above
   * Possibly given the other students new material to improve their squadron’s CAP program

The following will be used to judge the students’ presentations:

1) Using SMART Goals, clearly define the presentation and mode of communication for the item being communicated.

2) Choose and use the proper communication tool(s) to communicate the presentation.

3) Explain the importance of proper preparation of the presentation (i.e. why use the SMART Goals, or other similar, approach)

4) Explain the choice of the tools chosen to present this presentation.
   
   Written vs verbal
   Memorandum
CAP Unit Commanders Course  
Communications Fundamentals

Letter

e-Mail

If verbal: face to face, video-link, or telephonic

Simple speech from a podium

Use of projector

Use of microphone

Discussion vs Dissemination of information

2. Speaking effectively according to the setting. Each student will be prepared to give two speeches. One will be a five minute speech and the second will be an elevator speech.

The following will be used to judge the students’ speeches:

1) Choice of evaluators for the presentation and the intended audience.

2) Engagement of the audience.

3) Vocal pauses, speech dysfluency, or excessive use of filler (“uh,” “um,” “like,” “you know,” “right,” etc) need to be pointed out to the student. In the absence of a medical condition as the cause, if these utterances cause a disruption in effective communication, the student should be required to practice until there is no longer a barrier to effective communication before receiving a passing grade. Perfection is not required: effective communication is! If there is a medical condition that prevents effective verbal communication (e.g. stuttering that has not responded to treatment/speech pathology), the student should excel in extra written formats to make up for the loss of the spoken option of communication. A unit commander with a speech impediment can use a spokesperson. However, s/he still needs to communicate effectively.

4) Professional presentation (uniform properly worn, fidgeting, etc.)

Requirements:

1) One speech is to be 5 minutes (not 4, not 6: it is to be 5 minutes!) long without interruption.

   Examples of speech types include, but are not limited to:
   
   Staff briefing
   Presentation to school principal
   Presentation to USAF recruiter to enlist their help in your recruiting
   Presentation to local Optimist club
   Request for donation from local resource

2) At least one setting must include questions from the audience (staff, etc.) to assess the student’s ability to listen to the question and formulate a proper response. (Audience/staff is non-hostile.)
3) “Elevator speech” is so fundamental, this should be required of all students, and could be the one for Q&A.

***Caution should be taken to ensure the students who struggle the most are given the most help. It is easy to give the most eloquent and the most gifted speakers the most time to talk. They are the ones who need it the least.

This should be relatively easy if the student practiced at the local unit with his/her CC or PDO.

3. Writing effectively. Each student will prepare a business style letter and an appropriate email.

The following will be used to judge the students’ written correspondence:

1) Proper choice of modality (text, e-mail, memorandum, letter, etc)
2) Effectiveness of getting the information across to/understood by the desired audience
3) Professionalism (i.e. if applicable, does the chosen format follow the CAP template?)
   * Letter, business style (Required)
   * Memorandum
   * e-Mail (Required)
   * Text

These should also be done prior to attendance at the UCC. If the local CC or PDO has reviewed the work prior to the course, the UCC staff should be able to read the correspondence with minimal corrections needed. At that point, the student should be able to create one new written correspondence with ease.

Lesson Summary and Closure

Effective communication conveys information beyond what is said or written. Accuracy and intelligibility are of paramount importance. A lack of professionalism, real or perceived, can hinder the accurate conveyance of the information you wish to share. The Civil Air Patrol is an organization that is fun, but we are also in it to save lives & property in emergency situations. What we do will influence the lives of people today and tomorrow. Proper communication skills on our part today will make that influence a positive one.

Appendix 1: Resources available to you:

CAPP 1-2 The CAP Guide to Effective Communication
Available at:
https://www.capmembers.com/forms_publications_regulations/

Templates for written correspondence:
https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/media/cms/CAPP_12_7_Nov_16_90473D63CC1FC.pdf

Air Force Tongue and Quill
Appendix 2   Templates Commonly Used by Squadron Commanders

Business Letter With Letterhead

HEADQUARTERS UNIT
CIVIL AIR PATROL
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY
Street Address or PO Box
City ST XXXXX-XXXX

DD Mmmmm YYYY

Grade Sender’s Name, CAP
Sender’s Unit
Civil Air Patrol

Receiver’s Title and Full Name
Receiver’s Company (optional)
Street Address or PO Box
City ST XXXXX-XXXX

Dear Title and Last Name, Sir/Ma’am, or Position

   Enter text for first paragraph. Paragraphs are indented 5 spaces or 1/4 inch tab. Paragraphs are not numbered.

   Enter contents of subsequent paragraphs using same format.

   Closing paragraph should summarize desired action (if any) and provide contact information for the business style letter’s point of contact (if other than the sender).

   Sincerely

      SENDER’S NAME, Grade, CAP
      Duty Title

‘Attachment:’ for one item or “# Attachments:” for more than one.
List numbered attachment(s) mentioned in letter, do not number if only one.
MEMORANDUM FOR ADDRESSEE (for example, CAP NATIONAL COMMANDER or CAP/CC) ADDITIONAL ADDRESSEE

FROM: OFFICE SYMBOL (for example, GLR/CC)

SUBJECT: Brief Summary of Contents

1. Enter text for first paragraph. If memorandum contains only one paragraph, then it is not numbered.

2. Enter contents of subsequent paragraphs using same format.
   a. Each subordinate paragraph is indented 5 spaces (or 1/4 inch tab) from preceding superior paragraph.
   b. When subparagraphs are used, there must be two or more of them (i.e. you can’t have an "a" without a "b"). If there is only one subparagraph, then it’s better to make it a main paragraph.

   (1) Additional subordinate paragraph. The same rule applies about needing two or more subparagraphs. The following subparagraphs show the standard number/letter format.

   (a) Additional subordinate paragraph

   1. Additional subordinate paragraph

   a. Additional subordinate paragraph

   [1] Additional subordinate paragraph

3. Closing paragraph should summarize desired action (if any) and provide contact information for the memorandum’s point of contact.
"Attachment:" for one item or "# Attachments:" for more than one
List numbered attachment(s) mentioned in letter, do not number if only one.
"cc:" if courtesy copying others
List others receiving a courtesy copy
"1st Endorsement" if used. If not used, delete along with the other entries below.
"TO:" followed by recipient's office symbol
"Approved / Disapproved" for approving authority's decision

APPROVING AUTHORITY'S NAME, Grade, CAP
Duty Title
Participation Letter

ISSUING HEADQUARTERS
United States Air Force Auxiliary
Applicable CAP Unit Street Address
CAP Unit City ST Zip

SUBJECT: Participation Letter

1. The following individual(s) "is [are] authorized to participate" or "has [have] participated" in the name of activity, location of activity, inclusive dates, as description of role served during participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>LAST, FIRST NAME</th>
<th>CAPID</th>
<th>POSITION HELD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. Transportation to or from such activity is not the responsibility of CAP and is provided "as available." Privately owned vehicle travel to or from such activity is performed strictly at the members' own risk (reference CAPR 77-1) and is not under CAP direction and control. Parents of cadets will be advised.

CAP Validating Official's NAME, Grade, CAP Duty Title
As part of a nationwide effort to better brand and create public awareness of Civil Air Patrol, a required standard signature block for use when conducting official CAP business was added in January 2015 to CAPR 10-1. Branding is the image of the organization that comes to mind when people think of Civil Air Patrol. Our brand is shaped by letting people know who we are and what we do. Those messages must be consistent in order to be effective, which is why this first step in branding was taken as part of an overall branding strategy. The name "Civil Air Patrol" and the official CAP Logo (white triangle with red prop) are the branding marks of the entire organization, which means these must be used first and foremost before or with any other name, logo, patch, emblem, or marking. We are all members of Civil Air Patrol. Resources for creating this signature block are provided here: http://goo.gl/oN0sg8.

Please read the descriptions carefully and make your best effort to comply with this first step to better brand our organization.

- Cut and paste the signature block below directly into your email client signature section to automatically add this to each email message. If you have already done this, please verify the style to ensure that the size, colors, font, and text details are correct.

- CAP ranks/grades should be abbreviated in official Air Force style with no periods. (See CAPR 35-5, paragraph 1-3 http://goo.gl/Ph1ryr)

- The assigned unit and duty assignment should be on one line and written out per CAPR 20-1 and/or eServices. (NOTE: Standardize unit name by always spelling out name; refer to CAPR 20-1 for assistance)

  Follow these examples of duty titles:
  Pacific Region Commander
  New Mexico Wing Inspector General
  Florida Wing Group 5 Cadet Programs Officer
  South Oakland Cadet Squadron Aerospace Education Officer

  If you have more than one duty assignment, add another line with the highest organizational level on top.

- The phone numbers use a dot instead of a hyphen, and addition or removal of phone numbers is okay.

- The CAP website goes directly under the "U.S. Air Force Auxiliary" text (note: use "U.S." as the Air Force does)
A unit website may be added after the CAP website. (strongly recommend this be a wing or region website)

For the "Preferred Signature Block" below, the http:// and/or www are not used, and the hyperlink of the website should be verified and set to ensure that it is clickable. (One way to do this is copy the wing web address into Word and then delete the http, www and any other extraneous characters. Then copy this smaller version into the signature block. The full web address should still be embedded in the name)

The national social media icons may be used if hyperlinked. However, no additional social media icons/links are authorized. The icons may be deleted if appropriate due to email replies attaching them versus embedding them.

Please note that your unit’s social media icons should be at the top of your unit’s website to ensure ready visibility to visitors, and not in your signature block. Only the main unit web page will be used as a website destination.

No other disclaimer, official use (FOUO) reference, or motivational quote will be used unless required by law or operating under CAP Sensitive and Classified Mission Programs.

**Preferred Signature Block**
NOTE: Signature block uses Arial font size 12.

*** Cut and paste preferred signature block below ***

![Civil Air Patrol](image)

Maj John Doe, CAP
XYZ Wing Director of Operations
(H) 555.555.5555
(C) 555.555.5555
U.S. Air Force Auxiliary
GoCivilAirPatrol.com
XYZWing.org

*** end ***

**Plain Text Signature Block**

We recognize that personally implementing this change in email communication may be a challenge for some members. Some CAP volunteers use "personal" email addresses, work emails, email apps on smartphones and tablets, and official CAP email systems,