

Cadet Element Leader From CAP Regulations and Cadet Stuff Wiki

Cadet Element Leader is one of the most underutilized positions in many cadet and composite squadrons. Element Leaders, when properly used, can increase the span of control for a flight staff and allow the flight staff to either spend less time on CAP (and more time on school work or other equally important things) or to concentrate on higher level issues such as organizing an activity.

Contents

- What CAPR 20-1 Says:
 - Satisfactory performance during formations and ceremonies
 - Military bearing
 - Morale
 - DUTIES OF AN ELEMENT LEADER/WHAT IS AN ELEMENT LEADER?
 - Following/Learning.
 - Training.
 - Supervising.
 - Guiding.
 - What an Element Leader is not
 - Element Leader's Checklist
-

What CAPR 20-1 Says:

Cadet Squad Leader

Responsible for the supervision and training of the cadet squad, to include:

- 1) Satisfactory performance during formations and ceremonies.**
- 2) Military bearing.**
- 3) Morale.**

The cadet squad leaders should be familiar with CAP directives as listed in CAPP 52-14.

While the Air Force calls this position *element leader*, the CAP calls it *squad leader*. The two terms are completely interchangeable. Please keep in mind that the drill manual, which is an Air Force publication, refers to the squad leader as "element leader". Since most cadets are more familiar with the drill manual than CAPR 20-1, for ease of reference we will refer to the position as element leader here.

Satisfactory performance during formations and ceremonies

The element leader makes sure that each of the members of his element understands what to do during formations and other ceremonies.

For a normal opening formation, that means that they know where to stand, how to execute open ranks, closed ranks, present ARMs, Order ARMS, parade REST, and ATTENTION. It also means that the assistant element leader knows what to do if the element leader is absent. This would include knowing how to report to the flight sergeant as per AFMAN 36-2203 para 5.3.4.

Element leaders have specific duties to perform during drill & ceremonies. For example, a good element leader should know that he/she does not angle the head & eyes to the right during the execution of Dress Right DRESS. A good element leader should instinctively know the requisite number of steps to take during Open & Close Ranks (in this way, it's a leadership example: If he does it right, and for some reason his cadets do not know how to do it or have a brain cramp, they can "look to their leader" and see the proper position.) A good element leader knows his or her correct role in the execution of commands such as Column Right or Left, or Column of Files/Column of Twos, commands where the leader executes and the cadets follow "in trail," and commands where it is imperative that the leader execute the order correctly. These movements are all covered in AFMAN 36-2203 Drill and Ceremonies.

For ceremonies, the cadet may need to know when to clap, how leave the flight and report for a promotion or award, and other things that are specific to a particular ceremony.

The element leaders must be "tactically & technically proficient" in that they must be sufficiently familiar with their personal roles and their charges' roles in the execution of specific D&C commands. Their proficiency must translate to their troops in the form of instruction & leadership.

Military bearing

The element leader is the direct supervisor of the members of the element. As such, the element leader must take ownership of the element and do everything they can to improve the military bearing of the element. Organizing practices, leading impromptu lessons, and casually reminding the cadets to say "Sir" or "ma'am" to officers are good examples of how the element leader can assist the flight sergeant with improving military bearing.

A good element leader understands that their job is not to berate or yell at the cadets. The position is more of a "Big brother/sister" than a drill sergeant. Often younger cadets will respond quite well to a helpful element leader even when the flight sergeants and commanders are having no luck. The more casual relationship that an element leader has with subordinates is a very valuable leadership tool.

By far, the best way for an element leader to instill military bearing in the element is to display it constantly. By being friendly and setting a good example, the members of the element will naturally try to emulate their leader.

Morale

Morale is not just having a good time. Morale depends on the element feeling that is successful at cadet type activities. It also depends on everyone feeling they are a part of the team. With the flight sergeant busy running a flight of 16 to 20 cadets, the element leader's efforts to improve morale can become vital to the squadron's overall success.

The element leader should always be on the look out for dissent in the ranks. If two cadets are not getting along, the element leader should try to find out what is going on and solve the issue. If the problem is beyond the element leader's abilities, it should be taken to the flight sergeant for resolution.

However, being an element leader is not just reacting to problems. A good element leader will actively work to raise morale and esprit de corps. Some units will allow the element leader to name their element after themselves (like "Robinson's Roughnecks" or "Perry's Posse"). These names come in handy when yelling contests break out between elements. This is an activity where the elements try to "out command voice" each other by barking out their element's name or motto. The winner only gets bragging rights, but it's a great way to raise morale when there's a lull in the schedule (like when you are waiting for an instructor to show up). The cadets get to blow off some steam, burn some energy, and declare the greatness of their element.

Another thing that many element leaders do is create something that only their element does. It could be something simple like keeping a certain playing card hidden in their hat, a certain colored handkerchief in their pocket, or even matching notepads and pencils. For very little money, an element leader can create a unit identity that doesn't conflict with the flight and squadron identity. Cadets like to be a part of something special, and it takes very little for the element leader to make the element special.

DUTIES OF AN ELEMENT LEADER/WHAT IS AN ELEMENT LEADER?

Responsible for the supervision and training of the cadet element, to include:

- Military Bearing
- Morale
- Satisfactory performance during:
 - formations
 - drill
 - inspection
 - memorization

Additionally, the duties of an Element Leader can be broken into four categories:

- Following/Learning
- Training
- Supervising
- Guiding

Following/Learning

One of the most forgotten aspects of being an element leader is that the element leaders are still followers, not just leaders. Element Leaders must learn “the way things are done”, and do it. Element Leaders implement policy, they do not create policy. Their job is to keep information flowing between their cadets and the flight sergeant. The more informed the cadet staff is the better job they can do to help the element leaders. Once the Element Leader has mastered the position, the Element Leader should begin studying the duties of the Flight Sergeant and other positions, in anticipation of advancement.

Training

An effective element leader must closely supervise and train all of their cadets, so that they too can be future leaders. One of the best ways for a Cadet to learn the basics of the military environment is by on-the-spot training, and this training is best done at the element level. In other words, command can teach a uniform class only once in a great while, but a good element leader can correct uniform discrepancies each and every week. The basic training areas an Element Leader is responsible for include: Uniform Wear, Customs and Courtesies, Military Bearing, and Drill.

One of the biggest responsibilities of the Element Leader is to train an assistant element leader. One day the element leader will be moved up the next step in the chain of command and it will be necessary for someone to fill the empty slot. By having another cadet already trained in what is expected of an element leader, the current element leader can help to cut the transition time down drastically. A well-trained assistant element leader can also help the Element Leader. The Element Leader can delegate tasks to the assistant, such as calling the element members to make sure they will be at the meeting.

Supervising

It is rarely possible for a Flight Sergeant to know everything about every member of the flight, from how they are performing on the drill pad, to the last time they were promoted, to how they are improving in physical fitness. Instead, the Flight Sergeant trusts the Element Leader to supervise the element, take care of routine details, and pass anything out of his/her depth up the chain of command. Supervising and training overlap, in that a good supervisor can see problems and make on-the-spot corrections that have considerable training value.

The Element Leader is therefore expected to know where the members are, what they are doing, and why they are doing it during meetings. “Cadet Smith isn’t here” is not a valid answer, “Cadet Smith will be absent tonight because his bar mitzvah is tonight”

Guiding

Element Leaders must track cadet’s progress. Knowing when their element members joined Civil Air Patrol, when their membership expires, when they’ve gotten promoted last and what tests they have passed will make that job easier. If Cadet Smith joined CAP six months ago and doesn’t have a uniform, something is wrong. If Cadet Smith has been a C/A for the past 16 months, something is wrong. The Element Leader needs to step in and fix this type of problem before it becomes critical. Cadets who are going nowhere inevitably go out the door, and don’t come back.

A good element leader can be like a big brother, that a Cadet Basic or Airman can come to for advice, guidance, and help, without fear of reprisal. The element leader can guide the Cadet in uniforms, promotions, prepare them for encampment, and give advice on activities and special awards.

Throughout the whole process of training new cadets, the element leader must be sure his/her cadets don't lose their will to strive for excellence. It is important for them to keep their cadets challenged, learning, and proud. The element leader must listen to his cadets and find out what their desires and plans are for Civil Air Patrol. If the element members all want to have more ES Training, the Element Leader should tell their Flight Sergeant so that he can plan more. A successful element is a happy element.

Along with all of these things presented, an element leader may be required to carry out more duties, according to their situation. Being an element leader is the key stage between flight members and flight staff. An element leader will learn many of the leadership and teaching skills required to be an effective Cadet NCO.

What an Element Leader is not

Or: Avoiding Common Mistakes and Bad Habits

An Element Leader is not a Commander.

Element Leaders implement policy, they do not create policy.

Element Leaders do not punish subordinates, nor can they award decorations; instead, element leaders recommend corrective action or awards up the chain of command.

An Element Leader is not a staff member, and should not expect to attend staff meetings unless specifically invited.

Element Leadership is additional duty, not "special privilege." Element Leaders are expected to meet every standard and attend every class along with the members of the Element. Leading an element does not "get you out" of doing regular duty.

Element Leader's Checklist

Every Week:

- Make sure all cadets are present
- In the proper uniform
- Know about upcoming activities: inspections, orientation flights, bivouacs, community service, recruiting activities
- Have rides to those activities

Career:

- Are there at least 4 [Pref. 6] Cadets in the element?
- Does the EL know names and phone #'s?
- Do they all have membership cards?
- Do they all have uniforms?
- Do they wear them properly?
- Do they know the chain of command? Cadet Oath?
- Do they attend activities?
- Do they know basic drill?
- Has the EL supplied evaluations, constructive criticism, or other forms of feedback?
- Is an Assistant Element Leader being trained?
- Do the Cadets know how to get promoted?
- Have they tested?
- Have they been promoted?
- Are they ready for encampment? (To be honor cadet?)
- Have they attended encampment?
- Is the EL studying to become a flight sergeant?
- Does the EL know the goals of the Cadets? (Promotions, Positions, Radio Operators Authorization, ES Qualifications, Competitions, Solo Wings, etc.)
- Has the EL helped them reach that goal?

Once all the boxes are checked, the Assistant EL should be running an element of his/her own, everyone in the element should have at least 2 stripes, and the EL should be preparing for the position of flight sergeant.