

# THE WEEKLY SQUADRON MEETING

## Seminar M4 Lesson Plan

**Scope:** The best squadrons succeed because they offer well-planned, fun, productive meetings every week. While flying, encampments, and national activities are the most exciting aspects of cadet life, the weekly squadron meeting is what affects cadet achievement and retention the most. During this seminar, students consider how they can make their squadron meetings more successful.

**Format:** Guided Discussion

**Duration:** 50 minutes

**Objectives:**

1. Defend the idea that squadrons grow and achieve only if they offer productive and fun meetings every week
2. Describe the benefits of following a quarterly plan
3. Describe the elements of a weekly squadron meeting
4. Describe fun and productive activities suitable for weekly meetings
5. Discuss ways to draft, coordinate, and publish effective meeting schedules

**Resources:** CAPP 52-15, *Cadet Staff Handbook*, sections 2.3 – 2.5



### STARTING POINT

*Introduce yourself and state the seminar's topic.*



## ATTENTION

An experienced Cadet Programs Officer visited Hometown Cadet Squadron. This is what she saw:

1828 Squadron commander arrives with key to building. Meeting is supposed to begin in 2 minutes.

1833 Only half the active cadets have arrived. Commander decides to delay opening formation, hoping more will show.

1841 Opening formation begins. 10 cadets are present.

Pledge of Allegiance and Cadet Oath recited.

1842 Uniform Inspection; seems to take more time than is necessary.

1854 Drill: Random commands. Not much instruction. Objective is unclear.

1930 "Flight Commander's Time" A C/TSgt lectures cadets on how to prepare for encampment, telling them their poor attitudes won't be tolerated there. Encampment is 38 weeks away.

1945 Break: Cadets casually chit-chat. No refreshments served. No substantive administrative business conducted. Break seems to run long, like they're trying to run out the clock.

2003 Aerospace: AEO is not present at meeting. Some discussion about whether he even knew AE was scheduled. Squadron watches 41-minute documentary on the Space Shuttle instead.

2050 Closing Formation: The squadron is formed. The commander makes a couple announcements about the upcoming wing conference.

2104 Dismissal. The commander dismisses the squadron. Following official dismissal, two cadets speak up about not having phone & email rosters. A cadet NCO asks if the color guard can meet this Saturday; detailed discussion about the logistics ensues. Another cadet wants to see if any of the service coats in the unit's supply locker fit her.

2119 Frustrated mom tells cadet son to get moving, it's a school night and it's time to go home. Most members begin departing the building.

2132 Last few members of the squadron leave.

One month later: The squadron is down to 7 active cadets.

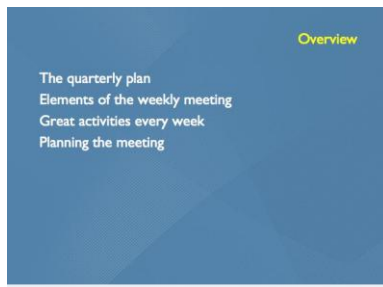
Unfortunately, exit surveys of dissatisfied cadets tell us that too many squadrons run meetings that look like this one. How can we make squadron meetings more successful? That's the goal of this seminar.

## **MOTIVATION**

Squadron meetings give your unit 52 opportunities each year to motivate or de-motivate your cadets.

Experienced cadets – the 10% of the Cadet Corps who are in CAP for the long haul – might tolerate boring, uninspiring squadron meetings, but new cadets will not.

The quality of the squadron meeting has a direct impact on cadet morale, achievement, and retention.

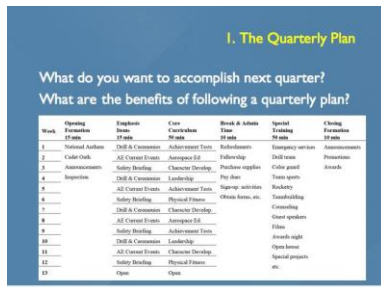


## **OVERVIEW**

*See slide.*

## MAIN POINT #1

### GREAT SQUADRON MEETINGS BEGIN WITH A QUARTERLY PLAN



### What are some things your squadron would want to accomplish next quarter?

#### Anticipated Responses:

- Start a color guard
- Get cadets through Model Rocketry
- Qualify cadets for UDF
- Increase membership & run Cadet Great Start
- Prepare for cadet competition
- Build and fly R/C aircraft

#### [Lecture Items]

1. Think in terms of pursuing one or two major projects each quarter. Then point your squadron meetings at those goals and go. If you're not sure how to set goals, consider the "S.M.A.R.T." approach described in section 2.3 of the *Cadet Staff Handbook*. (Briefly show the students that section.)
2. The cadet regulation advises squadrons to take a quarterly approach to planning. Under such a system, half of your meeting is used to help cadets fulfill their *individual promotion requirements*, and half of the meeting is devoted to the *bigger goals you want to accomplish as a squadron*.

### Consider the suggested quarterly schedule. What are some features you notice about it?

[See the quarterly schedule included in CAPP 52-15, section 2.4]

#### Anticipated Responses:

1. There is a well-defined structure.
2. Each night has a "theme" in the Core Curriculum area.
3. There is a 50-minute block for special training each night.

## **INTERIM SUMMARY**

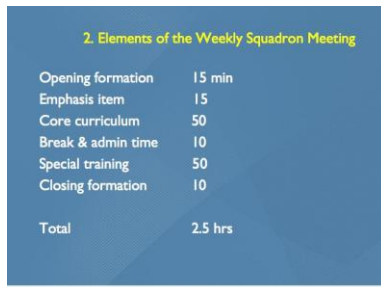
Using a quarterly plan to guide your squadron meetings will help you achieve meaningful results. You'll find you have more time to work on projects that matter to you than if you thought only in terms of one week to the next, or one month at a time.

## **TRANSITION**

We've outlined the quarter in broad strokes. Now let's drill down to see what a good weekly meeting looks like.

## MAIN POINT #2

### ELEMENTS OF THE WEEKLY SQUADRON MEETING



2. Elements of the Weekly Squadron Meeting	
Opening formation	15 min
Emphasis item	15
Core curriculum	50
Break & admin time	10
Special training	50
Closing formation	10
Total	2.5 hrs

#### How should a cadet meeting begin? What does your squadron do?

##### Anticipated Responses:

Opening Formation: Make your start official by assembling the squadron in formation, followed by:

- a. National Anthem (the Pledge of Allegiance is not recited in formation)
- b. Cadet Oath
- c. Announcements (relevant to this meeting)
- d. Inspection (see CAPP 52-15, section 2.11)

#### The quarterly schedule calls for an “emphasis item” to come next. Drill, safety talks, and aerospace current events are the norm for this block. What are some best practices in these areas?

##### Anticipated Responses:

Drill: Have a training goal. Segregate new and experienced cadets so they can work on different commands. Ensure the cadets who teach drill review the drill manual and teach it right.

Safety Meeting: Make it engaging. Give the cadets an aircraft or hiking accident report and let them analyze it. Consider an upcoming activity and have the cadets do an ORM to prepare for it. Avoid preachy lectures.

Aerospace Current Events: What’s going on in the world of aerospace? Allow members to share news articles. Discuss a recent CAP mission involving air assets.

**Next comes the “Core Curriculum” block. It’s a 50-minute block for leadership activities, aerospace activities, character forums, testing, and the like. What are some best practices in these areas?**

Anticipated Responses:

Can vary greatly. Consider breaking your squadron into smaller groups and giving each group activities suited to where they are in the program. (Have airmen do one thing, NCOs do something else in the same subject.)

**The schedule then calls for a 10-minute spot for break and/or administrative time. Does anyone have any best practices to share in this area?**

Anticipated Responses:

Make refreshments available. Consider selling sodas and snacks, with the profits going to support the squadron.

Have cadets sign up for weekend activities at this time; put sign up sheets on your bulletin board.

If someone needs paperwork signed, this is the time to do it.

**Again, the benefit of using a quarterly schedule is it gives you 50 minutes every night to spend on “Special Training” that advances the squadron’s long-term goals. What best practices do you suggest here?**

Anticipated Responses:

Can vary greatly. What’s important is that the activities in this block advance the squadron’s overall goals for the quarter. Further, this block should provide a sense of continuity, a sense that what happens in one meeting will build on the next.

**No surprise that the suggested schedule calls for a closing formation to end the meeting. What are some best practices here?**

Anticipated Responses:

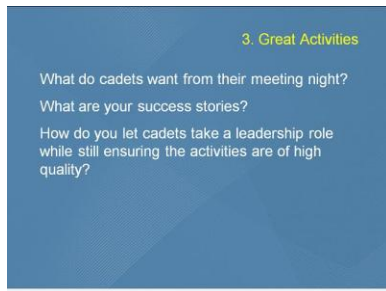
1. Last chance for announcements about upcoming activities.
2. Great time for to promote cadets and present awards.
3. End on time, every time. When “dismissed” is commanded, the meeting is over.  
(As the song goes, “Closing time. You don’t have to go home, but you can’t stay here.”)

## **TRANSITION**

That’s the anatomy of a squadron meeting, but what about the activities themselves that fill the meeting? Let’s consider what makes great meetings great.

## MAIN POINT #3

### SQUADRON MEETINGS NEED GREAT ACTIVITIES



#### What do cadets want in the activities offered on meeting night? What don't they want?

[Record the students' responses on the whiteboard using a "T" table as shown below.]

#### Anticipated Responses:

Want	Don't Want
Hands on	Lectures
Well planned	Impromptu, poorly organized
Meaningful	Silly, with no relevance to squadron goals
Challenging	Too juvenile
Chance to lead	Totally run by seniors
Fun	Too much like school
Competitive	Passive, uninspiring

**EMPHASIS ITEM:** Remember our discussion in the "Resources for Great Activities" seminar. There are tons of lesson plans, activity guides, and the like already available to support your meetings.

*To further emphasize the point:*

#### What sorts of activities have you had success with during weekly squadron meetings?

#### Anticipated Responses:

Answers can vary. As students share their success stories, point back to the "T" table above to show how that success meets some of those criteria.

**3. Great Activities**

Suggested process when using cadets to lead activities:

<p>1. A senior or experienced cadet officer meets with the cadet to discuss goals &amp; vision for the activity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2 Weeks Prior</p>	<p>2. Cadet begins to do some thinking and finds and personalizes a lesson plan. Cadet should rely on published lesson plans vs. original work.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 Week Prior</p>	<p>3. "Check Ride." Cadet presents their ideas in depth to the cadet officer or senior, who provides mentoring and quality control. Postpone the activity if the cadet is clearly not ready to lead.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 Week Prior</p>	<p>4. Squadron Meeting. Cadet leads activity or class.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">D-Day</p>
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**Cadet officers and NCOs will often lead activities, or assist seniors with teaching. How do you allow cadets to take a leadership role while also ensuring the activities will be of high quality?**

Anticipated Responses:

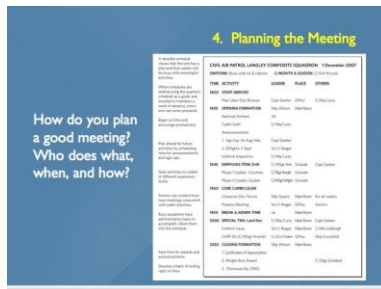
Answers can vary. Perhaps the best practice is to use a "check ride" system like this:

<p>1. A senior or experienced cadet officer meets with the cadet to discuss goals and vision for the activity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2 Weeks Prior</p>	<p>2. Cadet begins to do some thinking and finds and personalizes a lesson plan. Cadet should rely on published lesson plans vs. original work.*</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 Week Prior</p>	<p>3. "Check Ride." Cadet presents their ideas in depth to the cadet officer or senior, who provides mentoring and quality control. Postpone the activity or class if the cadet is clearly not ready to take a leadership role.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 Week Prior</p>	<p>4. SQUADRON MEETING Cadet leads activity or class.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">D-Day</p>
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\* If the squadron needs to develop a lesson plan from scratch, see section 2.5 in the *Cadet Staff Handbook* for some tips. (Briefly show students this section, which is included in their student handout.)

## MAIN POINT #4

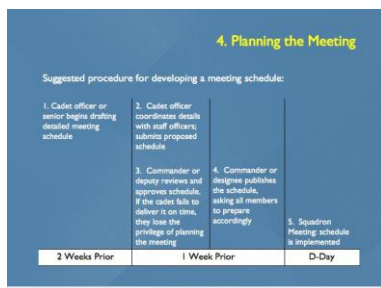
### GREAT SQUADRON MEETINGS REQUIRE THOROUGH PLANNING



Planning is the key. How would you go about drafting, coordinating, publishing, and implementing a schedule for a weekly meeting? Who does what, when?

Anticipated Response:

Answers vary. A suggested flowchart is shown below. Consider diagramming this chart on the whiteboard. The chart is also included in the student handout.



<p>1. Cadet officer or senior begins drafting detailed meeting schedule</p> <p>2 Weeks Prior</p>	<p>2. Cadet officer coordinates details with staff officers; submits proposed schedule</p> <p>3. Commander or deputy reviews and approves schedule. If the cadet fails to deliver a schedule on time, they lose the privilege of planning that meeting.</p> <p>4. Commander or designee publishes the schedule, asking all members to prepare accordingly</p> <p>1 Week Prior</p>	<p>5. SQUADRON MEETING Schedule is implemented</p> <p>D-Day</p>
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**EMPHASIS ITEM:** Refer students to the sample schedule in CAPP 52-15, 2.4, which is also reproduced here. Address some of the talking points shown in the margin. Emphasize that since great squadron meetings require thorough planning, every squadron needs to have a schedule looking something like this.

A detailed schedule shows that the unit has a plan and that cadets will be busy with meaningful activities.

When schedules are drafted using the quarterly schedule as a guide and emailed to members a week in advance, everyone can come prepared.

Begin on time and encourage promptness.

Plan ahead for future activities by scheduling time for announcements and sign-ups.

Gear activities to cadets of different experience levels.

Seniors can conduct business meetings concurrent with cadet activities.

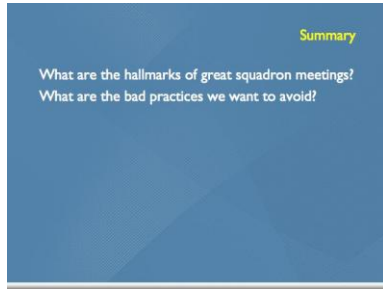
Busy squadrons have administrative tasks to accomplish. Work them into the schedule.

Save time for awards and announcements.

Develop a habit of ending right on time.

<b>CIVIL AIR PATROL LANGLEY COMPOSITE SQUADRON 1 December 2007</b>				
<b>UNIFORM:</b> Blues with tie & ribbons		<b>C/MONTH &amp; GUIDON:</b> C/SrA Provost		
<u>TIME</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>LEADER</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>OTHERS</u>
<b>1800</b>	<b>STAFF ARRIVES</b>			
	Plan Labor Day Bivouac	Capt Garber	Office	C/Maj Curry
<b>1830</b>	<b>OPENING FORMATION</b>	Maj Wilson	Main Room	
	National Anthem	All		
	Cadet Oath	C/Maj Curry		
	Announcements			
	1. Sign Up: 26 Aug Hike	Capt Garber		
	2. OFlights: 5 Sept	1st Lt Yeager		
	Uniform Inspection	C/Maj Curry		
<b>1845</b>	<b>EMPHASIS ITEM: Drill</b>	C/MSgt Feik	Outside	Capt Garber
	Phase I Cadets: Columns	C/SSgt Arnold	Outside	
	Phase II Cadets: Guidon	C/MSgt Wright	Outside	
<b>1900</b>	<b>CORE CURRICULUM</b>			
	Character Dev. Forum	Maj Spaatz	Main Room	For all cadets
	Finance Meeting	1st Lt Yeager	Office	Seniors
<b>1950</b>	<b>BREAK &amp; ADMIN TIME</b>	na	Main Room	
<b>2000</b>	<b>SPECIAL TNG: Land Nav</b>	C/Maj Curry	Main Room	Capt Garber
	Uniform Issue	1st Lt Yeager	Main Room	C/AB Lindbergh
	CAPF 50 (C/MSgt Arnold)	C/2d Lt Eaker	Office	Maj Crossfield
<b>2050</b>	<b>CLOSING FORMATION</b>	Maj Wilson	Main Room	
	1. Certificates of Appreciation			
	2. Wright Bros Award			C/SSgt Goddard
	3. Dismissal (by 2100)			

## SUMMARY



**Let's summarize and try to be as comprehensive as possible. What are the hallmarks of great squadron meetings? What are the opposites of those virtues, the bad practices we want to avoid?**

Anticipated Response:

Answers can vary. *Again, make a "T" table on the whiteboard and record students' responses like this:*

Great Meetings	Terrible Meetings
Begin on time	Begin late
Detailed schedule	Schedule is vague or non-existent
Mostly hands-on activities	Mostly lecture
Instructors are well-prepared	Instructors "wing it"
Not just drill, drill, drill	Too much drill, drill, drill
Time budgeted for administrative tasks	Administrative tasks overflow the meeting
Announcements are brief, informative	Announcements disorganized & drag on forever
Full staff knows what's going on	No staff coordination
Classes lead by seniors & ranking cadets	
Follows the schedule	Entirely cadet run or entirely senior run
End precisely on time	Ignores the schedule
Planned, productive, fun = high attendance	End late, after scheduled time
	Unplanned, unproductive, boring = low attendance

## FINAL THOUGHT

How do you build a great squadron where cadets achieve, morale is high, and retention is high? It's no mystery. The solution begins with planning great squadron meetings every week.