

How the comp was won! Again.

A beginner's guide to Civil Air Patrol's Color Guard Competition



2002 Florida Wing Color Guard reports for Inspection – Columbus AFB MS

This guide was created to help teams prepare for Florida Wing Color Guard Competition. National HQ's Rules Of Engagement and FL Wing's Cadet Competition guide outline the rules of "what" each team has to do to compete, this guide attempts to answer the "how" you go about it. Teams should review the rules for competition before they begin practicing.

Version 2.5.2

Why should my unit compete at color guard competition?

For the unit, sending cadets to competition develops better cadet followers and increases the general skill level of drill and ceremonies in your unit. Color guard competition allows the unit to focus on a tangible goal for a limited time frame. Cadets in color guard competition aren't expected to have a lot of prior experience so this is perfect training activity for the majority of cadets. Color guard focuses on the leadership and citizenship portion of the cadet program, areas which each squadron should develop during the year. Color guard (and drill team) experiences help retain cadet members who feel like they are part of a team. Color guards are an excellent way to present your unit to the community either by public appearances or public affairs releases of their accomplishments.

For the cadets, color guard competition allows the opportunity to excel in a competitive team environment helping to develop stronger follower-ship skills, as well as work closer with members of their unit. Cadets should understand carrying the Colors of the United States of America is an honor bestowed only on responsible and worthy cadet airman and NCOs. Color guard competition is a memorable and fun experience for cadet participants.

For the senior members, competition gives you the chance to work closely with some of your units most dedicated cadets. Color guard affords the opportunity to teach citizenship as well as patriotism. The best part is you can help develop motivated young leaders to grow and develop in a close knit team environment.

How do I motivate my unit to attend competition?

One approach is to introduce competition slowly. On the first meeting night, incorporate the Rules of Engagement's manual of arms as part of your drill training. During the second meeting, review and practice the proper folding of a flag, and the concept of reverence to the Colors. On the third meeting, demonstrate how to do "About Turns" as a marching unit. Cadets who are interested in this training will become apparent. You can then phrase the question "Who wants to learn more about the manual of arms, flag-folding, and the Colors?" Those who are interested should be invited to attend a color guard training day. Make sure that training day is interesting and informative (be prepared). After a successful training day, ask the question "Who wants to learn more about this and take it to the next level?" That is the start of your team.

A second approach is to start an informal competition within your own unit. Challenge two groups within the unit to compete against each other. Two flights square off, or the cadets in flight versus the NCO cadet staff. Hold your competition. Make sure it is fun as well as competitive. Once you have your intra-unit competition, introduce the concept of attending a higher level competition. If enough cadets are interested, you can sponsor more than one team to Wing competition.

How does this guide work?

Most advice areas are broken down into four categories: Required, To be competitive, Things to avoid, and Tricks of the trade.

Required: Teams should focus on completing all the required items. This is the minimum you should complete prior to competition. Completing these requirements should be the goal of new teams.

To be competitive: Returning teams should incorporate these items. These suggestions are the little things that makes the difference between good and champion teams. **Things to avoid:** These are common mistakes that beginning and experienced teams alike should be mindful of.

Tricks of the trade: These suggestions are the detail items that experience has taught will help a color guard team in competition succeed.

Getting Started

How do I get started?

1. Find 4 cadets and 2 seniors/parents who are interested in participating.
2. Download and read the competition rules. (www.cap.gov) (www.flcadet.com)
3. Develop team goals.
4. Review the equipment, facilities, and uniforms necessary.
5. Review the finances needed vs. what is available.
6. Have a meeting with parents, seniors and cadets to discuss the schedule, finances and team goals.
7. Practice.

Personnel needed:

Minimum required too compete:

- Ø 4 cadets willing and able to commit to a practice schedule,
 - Must be C/AB to C/CMSgt, participants cannot have passed the Mitchell Test.
 - Should be willing to study for the written test event, and practice the mile run event at home.
- Ø At least 2 senior members (or parent sponsor members) willing to commit to practice schedule.
 - Willing to assist with logistics and transportation of team.
 - Willing to communicate and coordinate with parents of team members.

A team may not have two senior members or parents who can make every practice. Plan an early parent/senior meeting to determine which adults will attend which practices. A little communication and coordination goes a long way.

To be competitive:

- Ø Find a coach or instructor knowledgeable in color guard and/or military drill,
 - This person can be an experienced cadet, senior, or military personnel.
 - I recommend the coach should not be a team member.
 - Contact your nearest AF base honor guard and ask them for help. You can contact the Wing State Director's office for assistance with this.
 - Beg, borrow, or acquire videos of past CAP color guard competitions.
 - Purchase videos of military honor guards which can help with training www.paradestore.com is one source for these.

Teams that use a team member to coach are at a disadvantage. Mainly because when they practice one member (the coach) is not focusing on their job as a color guard member, but more so on what his/her fellow teammates are doing. An observer's opinion on timing and the crispness of your team's presentation is important. There should always be someone to offer constructive critiquing as you practice.

- Ø Develop a support team,
 - Include the parents of team members, and interested senior members in the logistical support of your effort.
 - Enlist experienced cadet officers/seniors to assist with study/uniform preparation. Find those people who are willing and able to help with team administration and fundraising.

The team cadets and coach have plenty to worry about with preparing for competition events. The difference between good and champion teams is the support personnel they have working for them. The 2002 National Color Guard Champion brought 8 senior member/parents to assist them at National competition in Colorado. The 2004 national champs brought 18 supporters to Ohio! The logistical efforts of the supporting adults allowed each team to focus on winning the competition.

Goals

Develop realistic goals for the amount of time and effort you are going to put forth. For a first year team winning Florida Wing Color Guard Competition is probably not a realistic goal, however being the best team from your local group may be a reasonable goal. Focus on doing well in an event or two. If your team is strong in running, make a top 3 finish in the Mile Run a goal. If your team is weak in testing, challenge them to study by making a high finish in the Written Test event a goal. Any given year there may be 12-15 teams at Florida Wing Color Guard Competition. Only one team can finish in over-all first place, but every team has the ability to accomplish at least some of their goals at competition.

Equipment

Below is the minimum (and maximum) of what a team will need for competition. I don't recommend a new team go out and spend hundreds of dollars on new equipment. Cadet effort, not equipment wins competitions. If the equipment you have doesn't match the regulations, spend as little as possible to conform to the regulations. Also note that equipment wears down and breaks. Don't buy top of the line equipment to practice with, use the more inexpensive options.

Required to compete:

- Ø 2 - Matching parade rifles with slings (can be facsimile rifles, or deactivated rifles),
 - Recommend facsimile rifles, the lighter in weight the easier the cadets can drill with them.
- Ø 2 - Matching flag poles with U.S. Flag, and organizational (squadron) flag with stands,
 - Recommend 7'x1" or 8'x 1" poles. Wooden poles tend to break in high wind conditions (replaced 5 poles in four years of competition). Aluminum poles need more care to maintain. My suggestion would be for new teams to stick with the wooden flag poles.
 - Flag poles must be same height.
 - Recommend using 3'x4' flags, smaller size flags decrease wind resistance difficulties during the Standard Drill event.
 - CAPR 900-2 suggests Army spades for spear points. I recommend using matching rounded spear points on top of poles.
 - Wider flag stands are better; they tend to support the Colors better as they are posted.
- Ø 2 - Matching white flag harnesses,
 - Rules of Engagement require these must be white.
- Ø 4 - Matching white pistol belts with buckles.
 - I prefer the MP style pistol belts without the eyelets. The eyelets tend to rust.
- Ø 1 - 5' x 9' outdoor U.S. flag.
 - This is the typical size flag used for the Outdoor Practical, however other sizes can be used.
- Ø 4 - Pair of white gloves.
 - Gloves that have gripped palms work better,
 - Gloves with the snap at the wrist hold up better then elastic banded wrists.

Don't purchase helmets, ascots, scarves, leggings, white shoe laces, and other paraphernalia. The NCGC rules disallow this equipment and you will simply be wasting money as your teams are penalized in the inspection. Consult the NCGC rules for specific restrictions on uniforms and equipment. I have used www.paradestore.com and CAPMart as sources for equipment.

To be competitive:

- Ø Have your pistol belts and harnesses fitted to your team members.
 - Sew the harnesses in place to the proper size.
 - Fit the belts to individual cadets and make sure they are the ones who use them at competition.
- Ø Have two sets of rifles, gloves, and harnesses.
 - Practicing tends to wear down these items, and they are evaluated during Inspection.
- Ø Have two sets of drill shoes for team members.
 - Practicing tends to wear down these items, and they are evaluated during Inspection.

Tricks of the trade:

- Ø Find a building with a reflective window or glass that you can practice in front of.
 - Timing can be improved significantly by letting the team see their efforts.
- Ø Bring a video camera to practice.
 - It is much easier for cadets to “see” and recognize their mistakes, then to be told about them.
 - Video the beginning of the practice season, then compare it to your competitive effort, it makes for great entertainment and shows how training pays off.
 - Give a copy of the video to all team members; it makes a nice memento for the team to remember their efforts by.

Practice facility:

The following is the facilities needed in order to practice all seven color guard events:

- Ø 50' x 90' piece of pavement. Parking lots/tarmacs work ok, hangars, air-conditioned gyms work best.
- Ø Outdoor flagpole, with no impediments around it. I.e. bushes, walls etc.
- Ø Classroom setting to practice Indoor Presentation, and to use as study facility and for panel quiz.
- Ø ¼ mile track or a measured mile street course.
- Ø Drinking water and restroom accessibility are a must.

If your unit doesn't have these type facilities, high schools, churches and military bases are good places to find them.

Finances and fund raising:

A brand new blues uniform with all the accessories is about \$150 a cadet. A brand new set of color guard equipment is about \$700. Teams just starting out shouldn't expend large amounts of money to attend competition. For competition, ensure that your cadet's uniforms are in good repair and have color guard equipment. Some ideas for fund-raising teams have done in the past include:

- Ø Carwash - pre-selling tickets works great as many people will give you the donation and not show up to the event.
- Ø Yard sale – great opportunity to clear out garage and raise money.
- Ø Corporate Sponsorship – Invite local business to sponsor your team.

Practice Schedule:

In my experience it takes at least 2 months of weekend practices to get a team ready for competition. At a minimum you should schedule 8 practices. I have found that Sunday afternoons usually have the least amount of scheduling conflict with school activities, work, church, and other CAP functions. I also recommend using the time before or after the regular weekly meetings to devote to some aspect of practice, usually the mile run or test event.

Beginning teams shouldn't overdo the practice schedule. You can't practice yourself the all-important competition experience. Practice enough to be confident in your routines without becoming exhausted by the effort.

A sample daily practice schedule for a Sunday afternoon would be as follows:

1300-1400 Standard Drill
1400-1500 Indoor Practical
1500-1600 Study/review Written Test Event, Panel Quiz
1600-1700 Outdoor Practical
1700-1745 Warm-up, stretch, Mile Run, cool down, stretch
1745-1800 Inspection items to be handled, review day's efforts

Be mindful of heat conditions, hydration, and when the cadet's last ate before running. Vary the schedule from time to time to keep it interesting. It is important that you practice every event. All seven events are equally important. Many teams spend too much time on just the drill events.

One factor that stops many teams from competing is the mistake of not setting a recurring practice schedule. Participants and their supporters (parents) are much more likely to help out if you set (and keep) a consistent practice schedule. Put your schedule down on paper early on and let the participants and parents know when you intend to practice. Give them time to develop car pool strategies.

My preference has always been to start each effort with a full weekend training course. A weekend training activity is motivating to the participants and gives a good jump start to the effort. It also sets the tone, showing that team members are serious about their commitment to compete, and allows a chance for all participants to get to know each other a little better.



2002 SER Color Guard (Florida) practices the day before NCGC begins.



2000 Lantana Drill Team and Color Guard cadets study for the Written Test.

The Events

In-Ranks Inspection

Inspection is the one event, where the support crew can win the event for the team. I don't recommend beginning teams go out and spend a lot of money on uniforms, tailoring, and equipment. Experienced teams will have a distinct edge on you in this event. Better to save your money until you have a competition or two under your belt to see how it's done. This is the my least favorite event due too expense, and time commitment involved. Consult the Rules of Engagement for the proper sequence of commands and reporting procedures.

Required to compete:

- Ø 4 - Same-style short-sleeve blues uniforms with ribbons, nameplates, cut-outs etc.
 - Females should wear the tuck-in shirts with belted pants if on a mixed gender team to be "same-style".
- Ø 4 - White pistol belts with buckles.
- Ø 2 - White flag-harnesses.
- Ø 2 - Parade rifles.
- Ø 4 - Pair of white gloves.

Uniforms should fit properly and be in good repair. No ties/tie tabs, helmets, ascots, white boot laces etc. are allowed in competition. Review the Rules of Engagement thoroughly before making uniform purchases.

To be competitive:

- Ø Uniforms should be new, and only used for competition.
- Ø All uniforms should be same fabric/shade i.e. blues pants come in different fabrics and shades. Blues pants come in shade numbers 1620 + 1625. All shirts are shade 1550.
- Ø Uniforms should be tailored to fit each cadet.
- Ø Uniforms should be prepared so that the same item i.e. cut-outs are placed by the same person, this ensures uniformity throughout the team.



1999 NCGC Champs (PR Wing)



2002 NCGC Champs (FL Wing)

Stand for Inspection

Tricks of the trade:

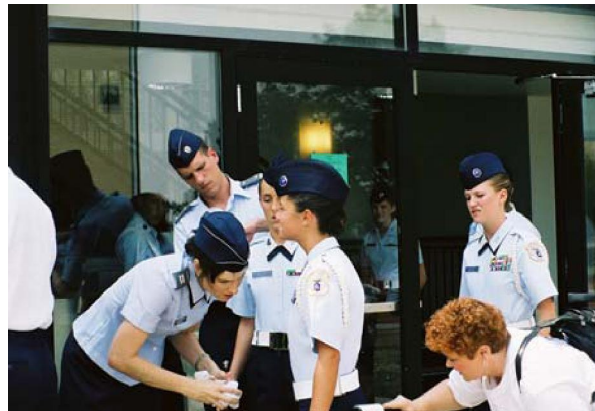
- Ø Color coordinate your equipment. Brown parade rifles with white gloves, harnesses and belts, may not look as coordinated as white parade rifles with white gloves, harnesses and belts.
- Ø Skin-tight uniforms vs. regulation fitting uniforms. Skin-tight uniforms are clearly in violation of the CAPM 39-1. However, they usually do win Inspection. If you decide to tailor your uniforms to be skin-tight, be aware you may lose an Inspection if officials finally decide to enforce the rule.
- Ø Size by height. Your team should form up in some semblance of height order.
- Ø Command voice makes the commander. Judges are looking for (and grading) someone who is clear and confident when they call commands. That cadet may not be the best leader on your team, but they should be the senior flag bearer while you march. Too much of the scoring is reliant on the team commander's voice to ignore this aspect of their ability.
- Ø Remind your team of the hygiene details repeatedly before competition i.e. haircuts, shaving etc.
- Ø Don't wait until the last minute to put uniforms together.
- Ø Clean your equipment before competition.
- Ø Don't rely on dry-cleaners to get it right.
- Ø Female hair takes a long time to prepare, schedule your team accordingly.
- Ø Leave NOTHING to chance. Preparation of logistics and personnel is crucial to success.

Many teams neglect to practice for Inspection. The drill movements may be similar to the Standard Drill routine but they are not identical. Flag bearers do not carry flags during inspection. Practice "Present Arms" at close interval (4 inches) and you will see what I mean.

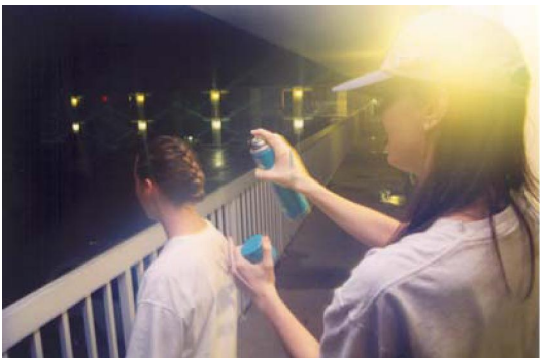
Color Guards preparing for Inspection:



Color guard uniforms 2 days before competition.



Just before Inspection, support crew does last minute checks on uniforms.



Toughest part of Inspection: The French braid!



Even brand new cut-outs get cleaned!

Written Test

Since the issuance of ROE 5.2, Written Test is now the tie-breaker event. Mile Run is the secondary tie-breaker event. This is a positive change since Written Test is one of two objectively scored events. Florida Wing teams have placed 1st in the 2002, and 2003 National Color Guard Competition Written Test event.

Required:

- Ø 50 question multiple choice test covering the following material.
 - Leadership 2000 and Beyond, Volume 1.
 - CAPR 900-2 CAP Seals and flags.
 - Chain-of-command.
 - General CAP knowledge.
 - CAP history.
 - AFM 36-2203 Drill and Ceremonies manual.
 - CAPP 52-18 Physical Fitness

Tricks of the trade:

- Ø Study every practice, this event is slightly more important than other six.
- Ø Have the team members create review guides from which to study.
- Ø Go to www.cadetstuff.org and www.flcadet.com and take the practice leadership tests that are on-line.
- Ø Go to www.cap.gov and download the current chain-of-command information.
- Ø Have the team read aloud and discuss the material. Higher level competitions will ask questions which require true comprehension of the materials, not just memorized facts.

Sample Test Questions:

1. Who was the first National Commander of Civil Air Patrol?
 - a. Brig. Gen Chuck Yeagar
 - b. Gen Hap Arnold
 - c. Maj. Gen John F Curry
 - d. Maj. Gen Richard Bowling

2. What is the correct cadence while marching at “Quick” time?
 - a. 120 steps per minute
 - b. 100 steps per minute
 - c. 100-120 steps per minute
 - d. 60 steps per minute

3. How many stars are on the CAP seal?
 - a. 50 stars
 - b. 52 stars
 - c. 13 stars
 - d. 10 stars

Correct answer is (c) for all 4 questions.

Standard Drill

In Standard Drill, teams march through a preset order of 25 drill commands on a 50' x 90' drill pad. There is a 3 minute minimum time limit, but there is no maximum time limit. Teams enter the drill pad from the judges right from an area designated the "starting point." The starting point is usually two orange cones that the team forms up between, it is important to note that teams must exit through the same cones when they have completed their routine.

Required:

- Ø Teams need to be familiar with the manual of arms found in Rules of Engagement. Rifle movements must be done per this regulation. Case in point, there is no command "Shoulder, Arms" in NCGC, there is only "Right Shoulder, Arms" where both guards maneuver the rifle onto their right shoulder at the same time.
- Ø Teams need to be familiar with "About" turns. Per AFM 36-2203, the pivot person is the guard in an "About" turn. In a left about, the team pivots off the left guard. NCGC rules do not allow for "wheel" turns where the pivot person is the senior flag bearer.
- Ø Review thoroughly the positions of the flag, and flag bearers in the AFM 36-2203. There are excellent full-page pictures in this manual which illustrate these positions.
- Ø Make note of the drill routine, and when the flagpoles should be At Carry (in harness) or At Order (on ground) as per the Rules of Engagement Standard Drill command list.
- Ø Teams must maintain the 4 inch close interval through out the routine.

The difficult portions of the Standard Drill routine are the timing of the guards, and maintaining the same cadence and interval during the turns. Arm swing is mandatory during Standard Drill.



2004 SER Team marches on for Standard



2000 LLWCS team at parade rest.



2002 LLWCS Team stand at Right Shoulder Arms



2002 LLWCS Team marches at "Eyes Right."

To be competitive:

- Ø Practice this event to the point where the team knows where it needs to turn on the drill pad, without the commander calling it.
- Ø Practice to the point where guards and flag bearers are in perfect cadence on moving equipment without obvious cues for timing.
- Ø Time the completion of movements, so the guards and flag bearers finish a command at the same time, even if they have a different number of counts to complete the command. I.e. Present Arms.
- Ø Practice in all weather conditions. Wing competition is held during the winter and can be cold, wet and windy. Teams need to practice outside in high-wind conditions to properly prepare for competition.

Things to avoid:

- Ø Don't add extras. Fancy rifle movements and high-stomping are prohibited, and penalized.
- Ø Many teams speed up their cadence during the turns, changes in cadence are penalized.
- Ø Some teams move the organizational flag on the preparatory command "Eyes," all members should wait until the command of execution to move during "Eyes, Right."
- Ø Eyes on the ground! Too many cadets look down while they march.

Tricks of the trade:

- Ø Use a mirror, or reflective window to practice in front of during stationary commands. Guards can see each others timing.
- Ø Practice the team facing away from each other. Let the team work off the sound cues of moving the rifles and flag poles.
- Ø Repetition, repetition, repetition. Many practice hours need be spent just running through the first few commands in the standard routine. Present Arms, Order Arms, Parade Rest, Attention, Port Arms, Right Shoulder Arms, Present Arms, Order Arms, Right Shoulder Arms and repeat. Make special note of the position of the flagpoles required for each command.
- Ø Have the team form-up holding a guidon pole horizontally at waist level in front of the team. Each team member holds the pole with both hands against their waist, maintaining a proper 4 inch interval with their fellow teammates. Practice about turns with the team holding the pole. This will let the team know who is moving at a different cadence than other members, who is out of step, and gives the team a sense of how the turn should feel when everybody is in the proper place.

My observation is that many teams put more time into the Standard Drill event than some of the others. This event is usually the most competitive. Teams preparing for competition should take this into consideration in their overall strategy. See "Rank Order Scoring" for more information on this.



2002 SER color guard at "Present, Arms"



2004 SER color guard turning "Right About"

Mile Run

Mile Run is the only component of the CPFT that is included in National Color Guard Competition. All cadets are expected to run. The event is decided by the total time of all 4 team members. Consult the Rules of Engagement to see how cadets not in Physical Fitness Category I are handled.

Required:

- Ø Cadets must be properly outfitted to run, with proper shoes and athletic outfits.

To be competitive:

- Ø Winning teams at the Wing level have averaged around 6 minute miles or slightly less per participant the last few years. Winning teams at National have averaged less than 6 minutes. 5:40 was the winning team average at the 2003 National Color Guard Competition.
- Ø Cadets need to practice running 3-4 times a week to truly improve in the mile run. Slower cadets can make significant improvements in their mile in just two months.
- Ø Cadets need to be instructed on proper stretching, warm-up, breathing, and cool-down techniques while training for the mile. Proper exercise techniques will help to prevent injuries.

Tricks of the trade:

- Ø Female cadets have 90 seconds deducted from their mile time. A female cadet running an 8 minute mile is equivalent to a male cadet running a 6:30 mile.
- Ø Similar speed cadets should be used to pace one another, and draft off each other in high wind runs.
- Ø Walkmans and other music are helpful to runner's morale while practicing. Run every practice, and after every squadron meeting.
- Ø This is another event where your support staff can help. Spread your adults around the track and have them shout encouragement to your team as you compete, your team members will respond.
- Ø A motivating technique for team members is to purchase team running outfits. Cadets are more serious about the task at hand when they are dressed for the part.

The Mile Run event is the least favorite for many cadets. I counter this by telling teams "This is the only event where experienced color guard teams have no advantage over their inexperienced counterparts". Any team determined to train can be competitive in this event. Mile Run also serves as the secondary tiebreaker event in case of an overall competition tie.



2002 FL color guard starts the mile run.



2004 SER color guard (FL) during the mile run.

Indoor Practical

Indoor Practical is one of the two “innovative” events at competition. Each team has the same objective, post the Colors in an indoor setting. How each team goes about that is largely up to the team. Teams are not allowed to view the interior of the room to be used before they enter the room to compete in this event.

Required:

- Ø Teams should have a thorough understanding of the reporting and room assessments procedures that are described in the Rules of Engagement.
- Ø Guards may march at either Right Shoulder, or Port Arms during the Indoor Practical.
- Ø Per AFM 36-2203, Color Guards are not allowed to execute “About Face.”
- Ø The US flag should be posted to the speaker’s right side. Review CAPR 900-2 thoroughly.
- Ø There is no time limit to post and retrieve the Colors, but there is a 5 minute time limit to assess the room.
- Ø When posting the Colors, the fabric of the flag should form a “diamond” shape with the fringe on the right side. The diamond should face the audience, not the flag bearer.
- Ø The US Flag should always be to the formation’s marching right, or ahead of the organizational flag if marching in a straight line. I.e. if you are in a single file with the US Flag ahead of the organizational flag you cannot do a “Right Face” because that would put the US flag to the formation’s marching left.



2002 LLWCS stands at “Port Arms.”



2004 SER Team posts the Colors.



Cadet Obranic dresses her unit flag.



Colors are dressed to form a “diamond” gold fringe on right side.

To be competitive:

- Ø Teams should eliminate as many verbal commands as possible.
- Ø Convey a sense of respect and reverence to the Colors is critical.
- Ø Practice entering a room with the Colors with a low-hanging door frame.
- Ø Teams should have a thorough understanding of CAPR 900-2. At some competitions the flag stands are pre-positioned for teams, at other competitions teams have to determine where in the room the Colors should be posted.
- Ø Practice going up on a 3-4 step stair. Many competitions see the Color Guard going onto a small stage inside a large auditorium.

Things to avoid:

- Ø Spectators are not allowed to communicate with the team or judges during the event.
- Ø Avoid tilting the flagpoles (no fish poles), carry the Colors vertically except when go through a low door frame.
- Ø Watch the ceiling! Avoid hitting the ceiling or chandelier with your flag pole. Part of your room assessment should be to look for and develop a method for avoiding these obstacles.
- Ø Don't lean the Colors against a wall during the 5 minute room assessment period (remember, reverence to the Colors). Have the escort hold on to the flags while you do your assessment.
- Ø Avoid using AF honor guard TLU turns, or 3 point turns. Competition regulations specifically say your drill movements have to be grounded in the AFM 36-2203.

Tricks of the trade:

- Ø Understand there are various ways the room can be set-up. There are 3 different directions in which a Color Guard can enter a room. Develop a routine to enter from each direction.
- Ø Don't overcomplicate your routine. A complex routine may not work in every room set-up. Simple perfection, paying proper respect to the Colors is best.
- Ø Take your time dressing the Colors. Many teams go through the motion, and move on regardless if it was done properly. Make sure the flags form the diamond shape facing the audience.
- Ø Use two rounded spear points on your flag poles. This way you don't have to worry about which way the eagle is facing, resulting in one less thing that can go wrong during competition.
- Ø Bring your own flag stands! If you have 1 ½ inch flag poles, and the stands the officials are using are only 1 inch in diameter, you will have a tough time posting the Colors. Make sure you bring your own. The officials will allow your escorts to replace the stands (if already posted), with yours.
- Ø The judges are usually AF honor guard, while they are instructed to follow CAP rules; they have certain biases on how posting should be done. AF honor guardsmen are trained thinking that the color guard should not split up (flag bearers going down separate aisles). I would recommend you cater your routine to account for this bias.
- Ø Practice marching in a single file. Many teams get out of step during the Indoor. Team members become uncomfortable marching in close proximity at a slower cadence. Only practice can overcome this.
- Ø Round your corners. Don't attempt flanking movements to turn a corner. You should incline around a corner. This makes for a smoother presentation, and also prevents the equipment from inadvertently sweeping against obstacles during a sharp turn.



Outdoor Practical

Outdoor Practical evaluates the skills of each team as they simulate the flag raising (half-mast) at reveille, and the lowering of the Colors at retreat. This is also an innovative event in that each team must raise, and retrieve the Colors, but how they go about it is completely up to each team. Teams are not allowed to watch other teams compete in this event prior to their own attempt. There is no advance notice as to where the judges might be standing in relationship to the flag pole itself.

Required:

- Ø Teams must be familiar with reporting (in/out) procedures as outlined in the Rules of Engagement.
- Ø Teams must be familiar with flag folding procedures as outlined in CAPR 900-2.
- Ø Team commander (not the team) retrieves the Colors from the judges, and then rejoins the team.
- Ø (Raising) Each team must raise the flag to full-mast then lower to half-mast.
 - Team commander does not participate in the raising of Colors, other than to hand flag to junior flag bearer,
 - Salutes should be rendered as flag is raised to full mast,
 - Salutes should not be rendered as flag is lowered to half mast,
 - Team reforms after the Colors have been raised and execute “Present Arms” before retrieving.
- Ø (Lowering) Each team must recover the flag from flag pole.
 - Salutes should be rendered as flag is raised from half mast to full mast, and then lowered again.
 - There is no specific prohibition against team commander participating in lowering of Colors.
- Ø Flag should be raised briskly and lowered reverently.
- Ø Flag must be folded into triangle (cocked hat) shape. Only the union blue should be showing with either the 4 or 6 stars pattern displayed.
- Ø Team marches to judges, halting 6 paces and centered on head judge. Team commander exits formation and returns flag to judge, rejoins team and marches team off the field.

To be competitive:

- Ø Teams should consistently be able to fold flag, so the flag is folded tight and flat with the proper star pattern showing. Flag should not be loose or have a pillow like bulge.
- Ø Eliminate as many verbal commands as possible. Teams should be able to move to the next phase of the routine without verbal command.
- Ø Practice on different height flagpoles with halyards on different sides of the pole.
- Ø Work out a method of lowering flag to half mast with out looking up at the flag or giving verbal commands to halt the downward movement of the flag.
- Ø Flag folding should be crisp and precise, while displaying reverence to the flag.
- Ø Develop exit routines, so the team knows where to go once the flag has been folded based on where the judges are standing.

To be avoided:

- Ø Don't let flag touch the ground.
- Ø Don't march the team to judges to accept the flag. Move the team to where you want them for the posting. Let the team commander go to the judges to receive the Colors.
- Ø AF Honor Guard judges always render a salute to the Colors after handing the flag to the team commander; don't march off before they have a chance to render their salute.
- Ø Don't treat the Colors like laundry. Avoid balling up the flag as it comes off the pole or snapping it like a sheet in the wind. Reverence to the Colors is important.

Tricks of the trade:

- Ø Check the wind direction before you do your routine. Make sure the junior flag bearer is positioned downwind from the pole to catch the flag as it comes down.
- Ø Don't grab for the flag at the bottom end furthest from the pole as it's lowered. The wind will move this part of the flag the fastest with the most variation. Keep your bearing, step closer to the pole and grab the flag in the middle of the bottom. This takes much of the guesswork out of where the flag will be on a windy day.
- Ø Turn the flag length wise into the wind, so the Union is facing the direction of the wind. This lessens wind resistance and makes for an easier flag fold.
- Ø Develop a routine for reforming the team after the flag has been folded and practice exiting towards the judges assuming they are standing in different locations.
- Ø Make sure the flag bearer always stays behind the guard in a single file or, to the marching right if your team is formed up side by side.
- Ø The Union never retreats. While folding the cadet holding the Union should never step backward.
- Ø After you raise the Colors to half mast, don't tie off the lines tightly. You will have to untie those ropes very shortly to recover the Colors. It would not look good if you couldn't undo the lines to lower the flag.
- Ø Present the Colors as they are raised. Have the junior flag bearer hold the Colors open as they are about to be hoisted. Don't hold on too long, you might impede the raising of the Colors.
- Ø Don't run the clips back to the top after recovering the flag. Leave the clips down. This is one more item you don't have to worry about making a mistake if you don't do it all.
- Ø Arrive early to competition, and practice on the pole to be used for competition. Refine your routine to the actual circumstances, but note that the wind direction may change by the time the competition starts.
- Ø Stay off the grass. Some flagpoles may have a limited amount of pavement around them, but it is much easier to march on pavement than grass.
- Ø Use different flag poles in practice, the flag pole at competition is probably not going to be the same set up to what you are used too. Your team should practice at different sites to compensate.

The Outdoor Practical be the most difficult event as it presents the most variables: Judge's location, flag size, wind speed, wind direction, and available area to work with. Develop a routine that shows the proper respect to the Colors, but offers a lot of flexibility to the team. Practice flag folding repeatedly as the folded flag will be the last impression the judges have of you as you complete this event.



Cadet Streifel retrieves Colors from Head Judge



2004 SER color guard opens the Colors



2002 SER color guard (FL) secures halyards.



2002 SER color guard (FL) folds the Colors.

Panel Quiz

Rules of Engagement 5.2 introduced Panel Quiz as the seventh event in NCGC as of the 2005 competition season. Panel quiz is modeled after the college academic bowl. The entire team competes at the same time in a team vs. team format similar to the “Jeopardy” TV Show. The moderator will ask a question, the first person to buzz in has the opportunity to answer the question. Each round has 10 toss-up and potentially 10 bonus questions.

Required to compete:

- Ø Teams should be very familiar with the rules of panel quiz competition before competition.
- Ø Thorough knowledge of Aerospace Dimension modules 1-6.

To be competitive:

- Ø The best way to practice is to actually have panel quiz buzzers. You can run a www.google.com search for “college academic bowl buzzers.” Several vendors are available to purchase buzzers from.
- Ø Practice against other teams of cadets.
- Ø Develop a database of practice questions from the Aerospace Dimensions modules. Toss-up questions should be direct such as “Who was the 1st National Commander of CAP?” Bonus questions can be more advanced, such as “Name the 8 Regions of CAP?”

Tricks of the trade:

- Ø Practice like it is the real thing. This is a fun event, as such cadets tend not to follow the rules as set forth in the competition i.e. talking out of turn. Teams should be trained in a competition type environment.
- Ø Enter the FL Wing Academic Competition. This is held at Wing conference each year, and is a panel quiz competition. Experience is key to a successful panel quiz event.
- Ø Huddle and discuss before answering a bonus question. Too many easy questions are answered wrong because one cadet blurted an answer during a bonus opportunity without consulting their teammates. Make the team huddle and discuss each time to reach a consensus of the correct answer.
- Ø Rephrase your practice questions. Cadets will tend to memorize a question before actually learning and understanding an answer. Find different ways to ask the same question in order to make the cadets learn the information, not just memorize your database.
- Ø Instruct your cadets to buzz-in for toss-up questions as soon as enough of the question has been read. For the question “Name the four forces of flight?” A cadet should be able to answer as soon as the “F” in forces is pronounced.

The Details

Know the Rules

Every team needs to know the rules governing the competition. You won't succeed, if you don't know the rules for the competition. Disputes at competition are settled by reviewing the applicable rule. You only have a limited time frame to dispute a ruling at competition (usually 1 hour), so you must be able to quickly and effectively bring up the rule from the regulations. Prepare your team for competition by doing it "by-the-book." If you don't understand a rule or need clarification contact the competition's project officer and ask for help. The rules for competition may outdate portions of this guide so it is important that you download the latest rules for the competition you are attending.

The Rules of Engagement can be found online at www.cap.gov in the cadet programs section. The FL Wing Cadet Competition Guide can be found at www.flcadet.com in the activities section.

Difference in Rules

Florida Wing makes a concerted effort to follow the National Color Guard Competition rules as closely as possible. It is up to the teams to understand where there are differences in the rules. For example, Florida Wing does not require an alternate to attend Color Guard Competition, Southeast Region and National require a 5th alternate member for each team. Review the rules for the competition you are attending before you arrive.

Rank Order Scoring

Rank order scoring is the method by which the competition winner is decided. All teams compete in all seven events. Each team is given a numerical score based on their placement in a single event. A team placing 1st in the Mile Run, will receive one point under the rank order scoring system. A team placing 9th in the Mile Run event will receive 9 points. The team with the fewest points after all events is the winner.

Example 1

2002 Southeast Region Color Guard Competition (6 teams competed in 6 events)

	Inspection	Standard	Written Test	Mile Run	Outdoor	Indoor	Total
Team: Florida	2	4	2	1	2	1	12
Team Puerto Rico	1	1	5	2	4	3	16
Team: Mississippi	3	2	1	3	1	4	14

Even though 3 teams won (2) 1st place individual events, the team with the fewest points overall (Florida) went on to national competition.

Example 2

2001 Southeast Region Color Guard Competition (6 teams competed in 6 events)

	Inspection	Standard	Written Test	Mile Run	Outdoor	Indoor	Total
Team: Florida	4	3	1	1	1	1	11
Team Puerto Rico	1	1	3	2	2	2	11

At this competition there was a tie in total points (11). The tie-breaker event was the Inspection. So even though Florida won 4 of the 6 individual events, Puerto Rico with the Inspection victory went on to national competition.

Only over-all ties are broken, such as the example above. If two teams tie in a single event for 1st place, then both teams would receive 1 point. The next team to place in that event would place 3rd and receive 3 points.

Example 3

2002 National Color Guard Competition (8 teams competing in 6 events)

	Inspection	Standard	Written Test	Mile Run	Outdoor	Indoor	Total
Team: Southeast	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Team: Rocky Mt	4	2	8	2	3	2	21

This is an example of a perfect score achieved by Southeast Region (Florida) to win the National Color Guard Championship. This is the same team that had the close competition in Example 1's SER competition. This demonstrates that Florida Wing is very competitive in Color Guard, and the Southeast region is a very competitive region.

When competing under rank order scoring rules, you have to make sure that your team is competitive in all events, especially when there are many teams participating. You can go to the National website and see the rank order scores of prior National competitions. There are a couple of instances where one bad event placement cost an otherwise good team a victory at National.

Judges/Judging/Rules

CAP makes every attempt to have AF honor guard judge these competitions. The honor guardsmen are professionals at color guard ceremonies. They are not however pros at CAP competition regulations. Before the start of each competition escorts should converse with competition officials to find out how the judges have been prepared for CAP rules. Questions about the rules need to be addressed before the competition begins.



USAF Honor Guard judges keep a close eye on the competition.

Military Bearing/Recovery

In my discussions with AF honor guard judges at all levels of competition, they have stated military bearing as being one of the largest factors in their evaluation process. The judges are all experienced in these events, they understand that sometimes equipment breaks, or the wind blows a hat off someone's head, or that sometimes a wind blown flag will block your vision during standard drill. Judges are looking to see that teams facing adverse conditions keep their military bearing and push on. I have seen all three examples happen at competition. All three examples were noted by the judges, and some teams received a better evaluation because they kept their bearing. Recovery from adversity needs to be addressed with your team as you practice.



C/Streifell marches the last ninety feet face covered by the Colors at 2002 NCGC.



C/Hunter marches on despite the loss of his cover was knocked off by unit flag earlier in the routine.

Reverence to the Colors

As important as military bearing is to keep, reverence to the Colors is critical. Teams need to make a concerted effort to show that they are respectful of the Colors. In the past, I have seen teams snap open the flag during the outdoor and indoor presentations. My personal opinion is that any movement that could potentially tear or damage the flag isn't very respectful. Many teams wad up the Colors into a ball as they recover it during the Outdoor Presentation event. Again my opinion is this isn't a very good example of reverence to the Colors. I have also seen teams do drill movements while posting the Colors indoors that detract from the importance of posting the Colors i.e. guards twirling rifles while the Colors are posted. When developing your routine, ask yourself "does this advance the cause of respectfully handling the Colors of the United States of America?" If the answer is no, change your routine.

The day of competition:

A few key points for teams at competition:

- Ø Don't rely on anyone other than your own team, have water, lint brushes, sewing kits, etc. needed to compete on hand.
- Ø Ask your questions before the competition starts. Make the competition officials explain how the situation in question will be handled, or how they believe the rule in question should be interpreted.
- Ø Videotape everything, not just your team, or the winning team. You never know when a team will do something you can incorporate into your own team to make you better.
- Ø Write down the test/panel quiz questions the team remembers right after the test. Use this to start a knowledge database for the next effort.
- Ø Make sure your team uses napkins at meals when in uniform. Especially if the Inspection follows a meal.
- Ø Put your concerns in writing and turn them into competition officials ASAP. Quote the regulation you feel supports your position.
- Ø Have a copy of all applicable regulations with you.
- Ø Bring your own outdoor flag. You never know when the competition officials will forget to bring one. Using your own equipment gives you an advantage.
- Ø Have everyone bring an extra uniform with them. You never know what will go wrong.
- Ø Be prepared for bad weather.
- Ø Be on time for each event.
- Ø Your team has been preparing for weeks, have some fun, and enjoy the accomplishment of making to competition.

If you publish it, they will know:

After the competition ends, no matter the results, every team should send a press release to the local papers/ TV, CAPNews and Florida Facts. Let the cadets involved know that you thought enough of their efforts to recognize them in print. The local media is usually very receptive to stories of youth doing patriotic activities. Positive exposure in the community is one of the reasons for CAP to do color guard. Cadets reading about their own accomplishments is a great motivator for the next effort.



Columbus MS newspaper April 2002

History-making all-female cadet team sweeps national Civil Air Patrol honors

MAXWELL AFB, AL—An all-female teen-aged cadet color guard team from Florida has made history at the National Cadet Competition at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Not only was this the first all-female team ever to compete at CAP's national level, but this was also a team that swept every possible first-place color guard award during the four-day competition in Colorado Springs, Colo., which ended July 3.

The five young women received the United States Air Force Chief of Staff Sweepstakes Trophy for the color guard competition and individuals on the team also won the Outstanding Cadet award, the highest overall score on the written exam and the "Female Fleet Hero" award.

The NCG color guard awards are judged in six areas. The Florida cadet team ranked first in all six, including a military inspection, a standard drill, indoor and outdoor color guard events, the mile run and a written exam.

The Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program has more than 24,000 members, but only about 4,200 of them are female. Many cadets come to the Civil Air Patrol with a lifelong interest in flying and space travel, and some go on to appointments at the Air Force Academy or to civilian careers in aviation.

The members of the Florida Wing color guard team were Celeste Brewer of Homestead, Fla. from the Tamiami Com-



Left to right are: 1st Lt. David Leali, CAP instructor; Cadet Marius Strohfeldt; Cadet Jackie Broedel; Cadet Jennifer O'Rourke; Cadet Jessica Craig; Cadet Celeste Brewer; Capt. Edith Miller, CAP

posite Squadron, Jessica Craig of Sarasota, Fla. from the SRQ Composite Squadron, and Marius Strohfeldt, Jackie Broedel and Jennifer O'Rourke, all from Lantana, Fla., and the Lantana Squadron. Strohfeldt was named Outstanding Cadet. Brewer took the Female Fleet Hero award and O'Rourke topped out on the written exam with a score of 98. The team trained with 1st Lt. David Leali, Venice, Fla., and Capt. Edith Miller of Lantana, both senior members of the Civil Air Patrol.

"To say that Florida Wing is proud is an understatement," said Capt. Vickie M. Meyer, CAP Florida Wing's director of cadet programs. "These young ladies have worked very hard over the past year, practicing every weekend and during school holidays. Winning the NCC title was the carrot that kept them going. They had the desire and will to be number one in the nation."

Civil Air Patrol, the official Air Force Auxiliary, is a non-profit organization. It performs more than 85% of inland search and rescue missions tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center in the continental United States. Volunteers also take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to America's youth through CAP cadet programs.

WASP flies Shuttle Simulator

Houston, TX—Former WASP Margaret Ringberg, considered a "trail blazer" in aviation because she was on the cusp of change for decades, was invited to address the astronauts at the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, on May 20, 2002. Ringberg was an instructor, corporate pilot, and racer. She is still an active pilot at age 81.

The career astronaut Ringberg addressed were especially awed to discover that she has logged more than 40,000 flight hours. She was given an enthusiastic standing ovation at the conclusion of her speech, along with some tokens: an Indiana flag that Ellison Collins flew in space, as well as a poster signed by 27 astronauts. General J.D. Howell, Jr., Director of NASA Johnson Space Center, presented her with a U.S. flag flown on the Atlantis April 8-19, 2002.

After her speech Ringberg was invited to fly the full-motion Space Shuttle simulator. Ringberg surprised her instructors by successfully flying and landing it, without a single "crash."

Women in Aviation Magazine Fall 2002

Have Fun:

Finally no team can sustain a credible effort unless it enjoys what it is doing. Long practices shouldn't be all business week after week. Take some time out of your schedule to have some fun as a group, team building is important too. After competition, look in the area that competition is held and visit anything worth visiting, i.e. NASA, Busch Gardens, Cedar Point. Etc.

Color Guard Resources:

Florida Wing Cadet Competition Guide www.flcadet.com to download,

NCGC Rules of Engagement www.cap.gov to download,

Leadership and Aerospace practice tests www.cadetstuff.org, and www.flcadet.com.

Experience to create this guide came from working with Lantana-Lake Worth squadron cadets from 1999-2002. In that period, LLWCS won 4 straight Florida Wing titles, and swept the National Color Guard Competition in 2002. In 2004, I returned to Color Guard Competition with the Charlotte County Composite Squadron escorting their first-time team to victory at NCGC. My goal is to keep up the high caliber of color guards being produced in Florida Wing by increasing the overall knowledgebase and having more teams from local units compete. Any questions or clarifications concerning this material can be e-mailed to Capt Leali at DLeali@excite.com.

I hope to see more units and cadets become involved in this very rewarding Civil Air Patrol experience.

Capt David C. Leali, CAP

Coach 2004 NCGC Champions

Coach 2002 NCGC Champions