

ACTIVITY 5.2

THE CADET OATH

This short, guided discussion introduces new cadets to the Cadet Oath. Before examining the oath in detail, cadets first consider what an oath is and what it means to swear an oath. Cadets will then review the CAP Cadet Oath, looking at it line-by-line to decipher its meaning and learn about the attitudes and philosophies found just under the surface of the oath's words. This discussion is an important part of Great Start because cadets must recite the Cadet Oath from memory in order to earn their promotion to cadet airman.

Suggested Instructors

A cadet officer or a mature cadet NCO should lead this discussion

Duration

30 min

Objectives

1. Describe what an oath is and explain what it means to swear an oath
2. Discuss the meaning of the CAP Cadet Oath by examining it line-by-line
3. Defend the idea that the CAP Cadet Program should include a Cadet Oath

Visual Aid

Refer cadets to the Cadet Oath shown in chapter 1 of the leadership text

LESSON OUTLINE

Attention

Read the commissioning oath of Air Force officers:

I, (Full Name) having been appointed a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter, so help me God.

Discussion Questions

1. What is an "oath"? What I just read to you is the commissioning oath that new military officers swear to. If someone says they swore an oath, what does that mean?

Anticipated Response

An oath is a solemn promise. Oaths are usually made in public and involve promises that serve a public good. When you swear an oath, you put your personal honor and reputation on the line.

2. Why does society need oaths? Give some examples of when oaths are used.

Anticipated Response

When someone has a serious responsibility to fulfill, we need to know that they are serious about their duties and the promises they are making. When you testify in court, you make an oath to tell the truth. When the president assumes office, he or she swears an oath. Members of the military swear an oath when they enlist or are commissioned. In CAP, cadets have an oath of their own.

Analysis of the Cadet Oath

Review the Cadet Oath line by line and use the discussion questions below to develop in the cadets an understanding of the attitudes and philosophies contained within the oath.

The Cadet Oath arranged line-by-line

1. I pledge that I will serve faithfully in the Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program
2. and that I will attend meetings regularly,
3. participate actively in unit activities,
4. obey my officers,
5. wear my uniform properly,
6. and advance my education and training rapidly
7. to prepare myself to be of service to my community, state, and nation.

1. What does it mean to serve faithfully in something?

Anticipated Response

Being faithful means being true and doing what you say you will do. In this first line of the oath, you are saying that you understand what you are getting yourself into by joining CAP, and that you are freely choosing to become a cadet.

2. What if you have a ton of homework to do and cannot make it to a CAP meeting? Are you violating your oath?

Anticipated Response

No. In the oath, you promise to attend meetings regularly, which means you'll attend most of them but not every single meeting without exception.

3. What does it mean to "participate actively"?

Anticipated Response

You promise to be enthusiastic about what cadets do. You're joining CAP because you are looking forward to great activities and naturally you intend to take part in them.

4. What does it mean to "obey my officers"? Are you promising to be the slave of your commander?

Anticipated Response

Here you are recognizing that you're just a new cadet who doesn't have all the answers, but you recognize that there are people who have more experience than you do, and they will try to guide you. You're making a promise to listen to what they say and to follow their instructions. If an officer were to try to guide you toward doing something morally wrong, you would not be required to obey them.

5. Why does the oath include a promise to wear your uniform properly?

Anticipated Response

You are saying you know there is a right way and a wrong way to wear the uniform, and that you will represent CAP and the US Air Force well by always looking sharp in uniform. Because the cadet uniform is similar to the Air Force uniform, you have a special obligation to live up to the ideals it represents.

6. What does it mean to promise to advance your education rapidly? Why is this statement in a cadet oath?

Anticipated Response

The word “cadet” can be defined as “a young person in training to become a leader.” Therefore, a cadet’s primary job is to learn how to lead. In the Cadet Oath you promise to take that duty seriously and not to come to CAP activities simply to goof off.

7. Why does the Cadet Oath speak of serving your community, state, and nation?

Anticipated Response

Civil Air Patrol is a volunteer organization whose main purpose is community service. Everything we do is altruistic, meaning that it is for the benefit of others, not ourselves personally. By participating in cadet activities, you are gaining from those experiences, but the overall goal is to build yourself into a responsible citizen, so America benefits too. America needs leaders who look out for the needs of the community, not their own selfish desires.

Conclusion

The Cadet Oath represents what the CAP Cadet Program is all about, and demonstrates that cadets are serious about living up to the ideals represented by their Air Force-style uniform. To earn your promotion to cadet airman, you will need to be able to recite the Cadet Oath from memory. Start memorizing it right away. Work with a fellow cadet to test one another’s ability to recite the oath.