

## Senior Members -- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What do I need to do to join CAP?	What do the rank / grade symbols mean?
Is <i>everyone</i> that applies, accepted into CAP?	Does rank / grade determine your authority in CAP?
Do I have to be a United States Citizen to join?	How does a member advance in grade?
What happens after I join CAP?	Does my military grade transfer to CAP?
I'm not a pilot, what do I have to offer CAP?	Can CAP members be called to active military service?
As a senior member, do I have to wear a uniform?	What qualifications does a pilot need to fly missions?
What is a "specialty track?"	Do I have to "Follow Orders" as a member of CAP?
What can I do as a pilot?	
How long will it take before I can fly as a pilot?	
Can non-pilots get involved with flight missions?	

### Questions About The Senior Program

**What do I need to do to join CAP?** Find a unit near you ([California Unit Locator](#)) and attend a regularly scheduled meeting. Talk to any of the members, particularly the Unit Commander, Recruitment Officer, Personnel Officer, or Senior Program Officer. They can guide you through the process of filling out the paperwork and getting you started.

*The basic process of joining CAP and a squadron:*

Meet with the prospective squadron staff and discuss your interests and the squadron's needs, etc.  
Fill out and sign an application for senior membership - obtained from the unit staff.  
Provide a photocopy of your driver license.  
Obtain a printout of your DMV record (from a local DMV office).  
Get fingerprinted... Check with your unit staff for the recommended procedure.  
Obtain 3 independent letters of reference to submit with your application.  
Submit the completed application package to the unit with the appropriate CAP / unit membership fees.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**What happens after I join CAP?** Once your application has been approved, you will receive a Civil Air Patrol Membership ID Card in the mail. The unit staff will work with you to determine how your skills and interests can best serve the needs and goals of the unit, and ultimately you will select a position or "[specialty track](#)" in which you will serve. You will also have the opportunity to begin various training programs, including orientation to CAP, which will help you to become integrated into the CAP team. These classes include training in your specialty track, general emergency services, and mission specific training pertinent to your level of interest and skill set.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**I'm not a pilot, what do I have to offer CAP?** There is absolutely no requirement or expectation that you be a pilot - or even be *interested* in being a pilot - to serve in the Civil Air Patrol! Many of the functions filled by CAP members do not directly involve piloting, including (but not limited to) ground radio communications, assisting in the planning, management and implementation of disaster relief missions, cadet programs, flight mission observer / scanner, ground search teams, and public relations. Your individual skills, time and interest are valuable resources which can be utilized in a

variety of areas!

[< Return to Top >](#)

**As a senior member, do I have to wear a uniform?** No. Some members choose to quietly serve and not wear a uniform. However, there is a range of uniform options available to senior members. You need to check with your unit to determine which uniform the unit typically recommends. Some units prefer a uniform of grey slacks and a blue or white CAP Uniform golf shirt, while others encourage more formal uniform wear. Civil Air Patrol members are easily recognized in the community since they wear a variety of distinctive uniforms. Since CAP is the official US Air Force auxiliary, members are also authorized to wear the Air Force uniform with distinguishing CAP badges and insignia. Wearing Air Force blue is a tremendous way to publicly demonstrate support and affiliation with this branch of our Armed Forces.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**What is a specialty track?** Specialty track is used to refer to and differentiate between staff positions and various jobs within Civil Air Patrol units, such as Logistics, Cadet Programs, Flight Operations, etc. Specialty Tracks have three levels of achievement: Technician, Senior, and Master. As a CAP member, you will have the opportunity to select one or more specialty tracks in which to serve in your unit. ([List of Specialty Tracks](#))

[< Return to Top >](#)

**What missions can I perform as a pilot?** There are several missions that CAP pilots fulfill, from offering cadets and ROTC Students orientation rides (called "O-Rides"); Air Force assigned Search and Rescue (SAR) missions; to working with the INS / DEA on border patrol or counter drug interdiction flights. Your ability to contribute will depend upon your level of experience as a pilot, amount of time served in the Civil Air Patrol, availability of missions in your area, and time and resources you have allocated for service. ([Mission Pilot Requirements](#), [Basic Information](#))

[< Return to Top >](#)

**How long will it take before I can fly as a pilot?** This, again, depends upon your experience as a pilot and the length of time you have served in the Civil Air Patrol. Some missions flown by CAP pilots require a minimum of two years service in CAP prior to beginning training, other missions may be flown after you complete [Level One](#) and have completed and passed a flight evaluation with a CAP check pilot. ([Mission Pilot Requirements](#), [Basic Information](#))

[< Return to Top >](#)

**Can non-pilots get involved with flight missions?** Absolutely! On all CAP missions, the responsibility of the pilot is to FLY THE AIRPLANE! This creates an opportunity for non-pilots, pilots training for mission ready capabilities, or cadets to participate in a variety of missions as Observers or Scanners. While these positions do require special CAP training, there is no requirement that pilots fill those roles. ([Non-pilot mission requirements and positions](#), [Basic Information](#))

[< Return to Top >](#)

**Can CAP members be called to active military service?** No. CAP members are civilian volunteers, and as such cannot be called to active duty military service.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**Is everyone that applies, accepted into CAP?** Membership in the Civil Air Patrol is a *privilege*. Not everyone that applies will be accepted. All Senior Members serve at the pleasure of their immediate commander, and as such the Squadron Commanders can choose to defer an application.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**Do I have to be a United States Citizen to join?** No. *Legal* residents of the United States, or residents of territories under the protection of the United States may also join. Talk to the Personnel Officer at your local squadron for documentation required for submission with your application.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**Does rank / grade determine your authority in CAP?** Authority in CAP is determined not by rank, but by position within the CAP corporate structure. Rank is awarded through an individual's progress and achievement within the senior training program, and therefore carries only relational authority. Rank does, however, indicate a member's commitment, experience, and service to CAP, and senior members are therefore afforded the courtesies expected when achieving higher grades.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**Does my military grade transfer to CAP?** NCO and Officer grades may be directly transferrable to CAP senior member grades. Discuss this with your squadron personnel officer for more details.

[< Return to Top >](#)

**Do I have to "Follow Orders" as a member of CAP?** CAP is a volunteer organization that maintains a military style hierarchical structure. As a volunteer you can leave CAP at any time. While a member of CAP, however, all volunteers are asked and expected to carry out their responsibilities to the best of their ability and maintain a professional appearance and conduct at all times. This does mean carrying out your orders as instructed by commanders!

[< Return to Top >](#)