



The Chief's Gorilla Guide For Looking Good In Uniform



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The Commander's Responsibility

First, a note to Commanders. Every military unit has a uniform culture. Left undirected, and on their own, members of the unit will collectively and unconsciously set a standard for wearing the uniform. Once established, that standard will perpetuate itself. As new members come in they will observe the standard, and dress down or up to match it. In any unit where uniforms are not inspected regularly, or where the leadership fails to immediately confront individual violators; the standard will plummet like water seeking its lowest level. This is a *serious* breach of military discipline and the *worst* kind of leadership! Sadly, in some units, the senior members are the greatest offenders.

No matter how bad the current standard is in your unit, it can be turned around. First, the commander must meet standards, if you don't correct it! You cannot conduct an inspection, or correct infractions, when the offenders look better than you do. Next, *demand* compliance from your Cadet Programs Officer, and all cadet officers and NCOs. When infractions are observed, use the chain of command to immediately confront and correct violations. When repeated correction fails, revoke the privilege of wearing the Air Force Uniform. Openly reprimand offenders and reward those who exceed the standards.

Uniform inspections must be the first order of business at any CAP meeting, gathering, or other event. Start with your regular unit meetings, then progress out to include all training events, CAC meetings, SARXs, etc. Use the inspection form at the end of this guide so that you are consistent and everybody knows the rules. This is not a matter for timidity - BE RUTHLESS! This is one subject which isn't open to debate, excuses, compromise, or favoritism, and requires the aggressive use of military authority. In every inspection select *one* cadet, with the best uniform, to praise as an example to the formation.

You will be amazed at how quickly you can turn a unit around. The payoff is more than good-looking uniforms. In a very short time you will have established a new culture, one with soaring morale and pride. You'll know when this happens - cadets will begin correcting each other - you won't have to.

Forward

Gorilla Guides are common in the Air Force. They are not part of any official regulation or instruction. They are written to integrate regulations, practices, and policies into a sort of 'how to' handbook to get specific things done. They cover what manuals and instructions don't. I believe a gorilla guide on uniforms for Civil Air Patrol is long overdue. What I intend to do here, is to give you some insight into the Air Force uniform and how best to prepare and wear it, so you can partake of the pride, honor, and respect it bestows on those who wear it well.

During my career in the Air Force I paid close attention to the customs of wearing the uniform, and watched those customs change over the years. I sought out every trick and ploy to prepare and wear the uniform, so when I wore it, it was

worn well. And, I believe, that had a great influence on rapid promotions and career opportunities.

Respect is the first step in wearing the uniform; it is your visible offering to the past, to those who served before you. When you wear it you become part of its tradition, visible proof, that time honored customs still live on. Remember, every time you put that uniform on you no longer represent yourself; you *become* the Civil Air Patrol, and the United States Air Force. And every one who sees you will judge you, CAP, and the Air Force based on your appearance.

During my time in the Air Force I traveled to many air bases. Most of those hosted a Civil Air Patrol Squadron. On more than one occasion, to my chagrin (being a former cadet), I overheard bitter comments from airmen about how CAP was wearing *their* uniform, or as one airman said to me, "degrading it".

To be fair, most CAP members never served a tour in a uniform. So, they don't understand there is a vast gulf separating the uniform from civilian clothes. Nor do they comprehend the depth of pride airmen have for it, or the deep offense taken when they see it worn improperly. In fact, the Air Force takes the uniform so serious that violations can be punished as a *criminal offense*, under Articles 15 and 19, of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The offender is subject to extra duty, base restrictions, fines, reduction in rank, forfeiture of pay, and even confinement!

Not all CAP members discredit the uniform, some are sharp as tacks, but there are enough marginal people out there to give us all concern – improper uniform wear does incalculable damage to Civil Air Patrol's public image, reputation, and esteem; and that hurts each and every one of us. When I joined CAP and attended the Squadron Leadership Course (SLS), it was shocking how little time was spent on wear of the uniform, and how casually it was presented – "just read 39-1," they said.

This casual attitude is a failure to understand the uniform's true purpose and function; which is more than putting everybody in color coordinated outfits. The uniform is *the* keystone in the foundation of all military tradition, discipline, morale, and unit cohesion. General George Patton took command of II Corps in North Africa right after the German's had kicked the snot out of it at Kasserine Pass. He lamented to his orderly about the sorry state of his soldier's uniforms: "If they don't look like soldiers, how can I expect them to act like soldiers, let alone get them to fight like soldiers?" Patton set up a merciless uniform enforcement system, with penalties so severe, no one dared fail an inspection. II Corps was never beaten in battle again. Unlike Patten, we needn't bust or jail our offenders; we need only to train them.

Throwing a manual at someone who has no clue about how to prepare or wear the uniform is the short cut to guaranteed substandard appearance. Reading a book about surgery doesn't make you a surgeon, and reading the uniform manual is even less effective. The uniform manual, by itself, is *not* the first, last, or only word, on wearing the uniform. 39-1 is a *minimum standard*, and in the Air Force, a

minimum standard is *never* acceptable, and that includes its own Instruction on uniforms.

39-1 exists in a vacuum and requires context. Those missing contexts are the customs and traditions for preparing and wearing the Air Force uniform. These aren't written down, they are passed from airman to airman, beginning in basic training. And over time, those customs change. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2903, does not require spit shined shoes and boots, but all airmen do it. The AFI says nothing about "high and tight" haircuts, but everyone gets them. The AFI does not require heavy starched shirts or BDUs, but every base laundry has racks stuffed with them. The same can be said for 39-1. What this guide will present are the unwritten uniform customs and traditions - the ones that truly matter, and make all the difference.

Command Presence

So, what's the big deal about the uniform –

THE EFFECT IT HAS ON OTHERS!

Sloppy uniforms are a cancer: they spread (see George Patton above). Tending to a uniform takes forethought, attention to detail, and a peculiar kind of pickiness. When those who improperly wear the uniform are not corrected the incentive of those who do stops. If there is no uniform discipline, there is no military discipline. Eventually, this will gut a unit's morale: and in CAP I believe that means members and potential members. Who wants to be part of an organization when its members broadcast an 'I don't care' attitude because they look sloppy? I'll bet my Air Force pension that a unit with sloppy uniforms is sloppy at everything else (again, see George Patton above). If you don't look professional, you're not. Appearances *are* everything; they reinforce an expectation, or dishonor it - there is no middle ground. And a military uniform comes with some real heavy expectations.

Those set of expectations are called command presence. If you look professional, you are! And you immediately gain a psychological advantage over other people - which is why cops wear uniforms. Worn properly, the uniform visibly expresses your pride, confidence, and leadership.

Civilians can be awed by it. They may step out of your way, offer you a seat, hold open doors, or simply stare at you. They admire your exceptional appearance; you have set yourself apart from them as something special, something important, and someone to be reckoned with - even though they don't quite understand why. While traveling in uniform strangers approached me in airports, cafes, and hotel lobbies, to comment on how "awesome" or "impressive" my uniform was. That is the power of command presence. But if you're not sharp, people look right through you, you don't exist, you failed their expectations. That is the best you can expect, more likely, you will be seen as a want-a-be who can't quite get your act together.

Assess Yourself

The single most important element of the uniform is the person in it. And the single most important element in that person is attitude. If you don't care your uniform flashes that message like a neon sign on a cheap skid-row hotel. Take a moment and think about the uniform. What makes it different from other clothes I wear? Why must I show respect to a uniform? Do I want to be respected while wearing it? If the answer to the last question is not yes, then you really don't belong in CAP and should move on to something else.

But I suspect most of you do care, or you wouldn't bother to read this. Since your uniform always reflects on you, take a look. Put it on. Stand in front of a full-length mirror.

THIS IS EXACTLY HOW OTHER PEOPLE SEE YOU!

While your standing in front of the mirror, take the uniform inspection sheet provided at the end of this guide and rate yourself. Circle each item description that best reflects your grooming and uniform. A single mark in the Out of Uniform column and you fail the inspection. (You can make up numeric scores for each inspection Item and compare yourself to others in an objective manner.) Did you fail? Was your numerical score lower than you expected? If you follow the tips and advice in this guide you'll have the sharpest uniform in your squadron.

Assess your Uniform

1. Is It Authorized?

All clothing authorized by the Air Force has a certification label sewn onto the garment. If yours doesn't – it isn't authorized. Avoid buying uniform items at a military surplus store. They are generally stocked with outdated items no longer authorized for wear because of changes in color, fabric, or style. Even if the garment is in the current inventory, it is probably used and its remaining serviceable life is not worth the money spent for it, and it may already be too faded for wear. Beware buying on line! There are dozens of military knock-offs, particularly in BDUs, which are not certified to Air Force standards. They are poorly made, with inferior fabric, and the camouflage colors don't quite look right. But they will charge you for the real thing, so buy the real thing to start with. Look for clues on the website such as, 'official issue' or 'DoD approved.' If you don't see that, move on.

2. Does It Fit?

I have seen more than my share of high-water pants and shirt button-stretch, all indicators the uniform is too small. At the other extreme is clown-large. Before ordering on-line or by catalog, properly measure yourself to be certain of getting the right size. What fit you last time may not fit now. If you are a growing cadet, it is permissible to go up a half, or even a full size, and still look good.

3. Is It Serviceable?

I've seen BDUs so faded there is no color left, just grids on the rip-stop fabric, and a suggestion of monochromic blotches. I guess this is supposed to look 'salty', but it actually looks ridiculous. Any item faded more than two shades ought to be discarded. Missing buttons can be replaced, but items with permanent stains, frays, tears, and wear-shadows (a wallet outline on the back pocket), also need to be discarded.

4. Is It Clean & Wrinkle Free?

This isn't rocket science. A gorilla can learn to launder and iron a shirt. If you're a gorilla, you still don't have to learn it - take it to the cleaner's, they'll do it for you!

Assess Your Grooming

The uniform has to fit the person; but the person must also fit the uniform. I am talking about grooming, in particular – hair. Grooming and the uniform can't be separated; it's a package deal. Your uniform can be utter perfection, but if your grooming isn't, command presence is ruined like a car hit by a train. You don't have to get a boot camp buzz, just comply with the standards, well... sort of, I'll explain.

Because 39-1 allows something doesn't make it a good thing to do. The current Air Force hair standards were adopted in the 1970s. The draft had ended and the military became all volunteer. As a recruiting aid hair standards were relaxed to accommodate the shaggy hairstyles that were popular at the time. But as earlier stated, customs change over time, and that shaggy 1970's look allowed by 39-1 and the AFI have long disappeared.

As a matter of practice, you will not see these styles *anywhere* in the uniformed services today. 39-1 and the AFI have fallen behind the unwritten rules of current military customs and practices. The troops are always ahead of the uniform AFI. Why hasn't the Air Force updated the AFI? No need to, everyone looks better than that. And here I part company with 39-1, and some of its quaint standards.

1. Male hair cuts.

Hair must not touch the ears or the collar at the back of the neck. Hair cannot exceed one and one-half inches in bulk, as it will 'poke' out from under the flight or service cap. Blocked haircuts are forbidden, period. Hair is required to be tapered (your barber knows the difference). 'Bangs' (hair drooping down on the forehead) is allowed by 39-1 but is no longer an acceptable custom.

2. Female hairstyles.

Hair length is limited to an imaginary horizontal line resting on the top of the back collar. It may touch the *top* of the collar, but can't drop below that line, anywhere about the head. Hair length may exceed the collar standard, provided it is worn up and braided. Bulk is also limited (3-inches), so the cap doesn't look like its floating on a hair cloud. 39-1 allows hair to be visible in front of the flight cap, but this is not accepted by current custom.

3. Mustaches.

Prior to the 1970s males were required to be clean-shaven. The mustache is a classic example of how open some standards can be. Mustaches were very popular in the armed forces during the 1980s – nearly every airman had one. That bulky “walrus” was everywhere. Mustaches began to go away and are now seldom seen. If you see one, it will be close clipped. While both styles are within the same standard, there is a world of difference between them.

4. Sideburns.

Oh, Pease... don't! You will not see sideburns on *any* member of the Air Force. I'll guarantee you, an airman reporting to my duty station sporting sideburns would have been sent immediately to the base barber – allowable or not! That is the power of custom to over ride regulation. One thing does puzzle me, why does 39-1 allow cadets to have longer sideburns than seniors? A steak dinner awaits anyone who can explain this to me.

FLIGHT & SERVICE CAPS

1. Preparing the cap.

Inspect the cap for sweat rings, dirt, stains, dust and lint. A dirty or stained cap requires dry-cleaning. Dust and lint are removed with a clothes brush. Flight caps are easily dry-cleaned, but while service caps are dry-cleanable, few laundries are equipped to do so, you may have to just replace it. Remove the cap insignia and wipe off accumulated grime using a cloth damped with Windex, then add a coat of paste car wax. Q-tips will remove wax residue from crevasses.

The Visor and strap of the service cap ought to be shined with black polish. Remove the chinstrap from the cap and place it on a flat surface for polishing. Use painters or masking tape as a shield to prevent wax from getting on the cloth of the cap while polishing the bill. Once the service cap is prepared do not handle it by grasping the bill. Grip the cap with the index finger over the top of the crown, with the thumb and middle fingers astraddle the cap device. Caps should be dust covered when stored.

2. Wearing the cap.

The flight cap is worn square on the head, no tilt to the side, and forward. The back of the cap is always higher than the front when worn (the same is true for the BDU cap). If you can't wear the flight cap with the back higher than the front, because the front now rests on your nose – the cap is too big. The expansion crevice on the top of the cap should be in a 'closed' position (the female cap is designed to be open). If it is open, the hat is too small or you have pulled it down too far on the head.

The service cap is also worn square on the head, no tilt to the side, and forward. Place two fingers along the bridge of your nose, the tip of the index finger touching the notch at the top of the nose, the visor ought to touch the top (middle) finger, or the top rim of your eyeglasses.

THE BLUE SHIRT

The secret to looking sharp in the blue shirt is to make the shirt and everything on it look like one single piece. There are two (2) types of blue shirts. The first is the 'issue' shirt, which is polyester-cotton. The second is an up-grade of polyester-wool. The poly-wool shirt costs a little more and has to be dry cleaned, but it takes and holds a razor sharp crease, is very wrinkle resistant, and is more comfortable than the poly-cotton shirt. Do not under any circumstances, launder or starch a poly-wool shirt!

1. Prep the shirt.

Before doing anything with a new poly-cotton shirt, have it laundered. This will pre-shrink the shirt. When new patches are sewn on a new shirt you will get 'patch pucker' the first time its laundered. This is because the patch and the shirt will shrink at different rates, causing the fabric around the patch to bunch up, this cannot be ironed out. New patches (and BDU cloth nametapes and badges) also need pre-shrinking. Drop them into a bowl or basin of very hot water for a few minutes. Let the patch air dry, newspaper will help soak water out of the patch. If you already have patch pucker, remove the patch, iron the shirt, and re-sew the patch to the shirt.

Placing The Wing Patch. Somewhere along the line CAP got its wires crossed. The Air Force Uniform Instruction directs all chevrons (which are just big patches) to be centered on the shoulder seam, which also means centered on the sleeve. There is no mention whatever of the epaulet. The center of the shoulder seam, and the sleeve, is located at the back edge of the epaulet where it joins the shoulder seam. When placed on the center of the sleeve the patch will be split into equal halves by the natural crease, as it should be.

Epaulets are set *forward* on the shoulders and this causes the patch to be pitched forward on the sleeve. A patch centered on the epaulet doesn't look quite right, and you can't make it look right. When the sleeve is creased at its natural

center the patch appears to move even more forward on the sleeve. A proper crease may miss the patch entirely, or worse yet, slice the patch off center. The alternative is not to crease the sleeve, stop the crease under the patch, or crease it off center, all of which makes it look even worse. Since CAP has made the wing patch optional, opt not to wear it and hope CAP corrects the placement error.

Remove All Loose Threads. And there will be plenty of them. The manufacturing process for the blue shirt leaves loose thread on the buttons, around buttonholes, and on every seam: collar, epaulets, cuffs and pockets. Carefully inspect the shirt for loose threads and clip them off with a pair of sharp fingernail clippers. Do the same with BDU trousers and jackets.

Sew The Pocket Flaps. Even starched (more about that later) the pocket flaps will not lay down. You can't put anything in the pockets anyway, so sew them down. This is done using white thread on the seam line already existing on the trim around the pocket flap edges. Make sure flaps are absolutely flat on the pocket when sewn, or the pocket will bulge. Sewing them down adds a crisp look to the shirt and accents the military lines.

Tailoring. The blue shirt is a full cut shirt, which will billow out around the waist if you don't get it trimmed. Do not 'peg' the shirt, you want it tapered with a little slack, you should be able to pinch about 2-inches of loose shirt, on each side at the waist. That slack is folded back at the beltline when worn.

Starching. If your shirt is poly-cotton STARCH IT! A heavy starched shirt is probably the most important thing you can do to look sharp. You cannot get a heavy, or even a medium starch on the shirt, out of a spray can. Spray starches are good only for light starch or to touch up a shirt previously starched. A heavy spraying of canned starch will build up on the shirt surface and give it an unwanted shinny appearance. Have the shirt starched by a commercial laundry.

It won't be perfect, so don't expect it to be. In a commercial laundry the shirt comes off the steam press still damp and gets shoved onto a rack against other shirts, so there will be wrinkles. I re-iron the shirt with a steam iron set for cottons and use Faultless spray starch for touch ups. Excess starch will bead up on the shirt as a white powder – quickly brush it away before it dries and sticks to the shirt.

A starched shirt not only looks better, it will not wilt in hot, humid weather. It is also cooler and more comfortable as the starch dissipates some body heat and moisture.

If you must starch your own shirt, it has happened to me occasionally, you can get an acceptable appearance with spray starch. First, turn the shirt inside out, then spray and steam iron the entire shirt, with no creases in the sleeves. Then turn the shirt right side out and repeat the process, this time creasing the sleeves.

Name Tags, Ribbons, Badges & Cutouts. I am not going to waste time telling you where to mount them, but how to mount them, so they look good. All of these

items require backing to hold them upright and snug against the fabric of the shirt. Otherwise they tend to 'hang' on the end of the clutch pins looking droopy. Do not buy commercial 'enforcers' the cure is worse than the disease. They are too thick, the wrong shape, and can be seen through the shirt.

I use the stiff paper cartons that single serving cupcakes are packaged in. I chose them because they are easy to get, are the right thickness, and easy to work with. Peel the carton seams open, double it by folding (white unprinted side out) in two along one of the existing fold lines. Center the top of the item at the top of the fold you made. Punch the clutch pins through and with the item firmly pressed against the white surface of the carton, cut around and as close to it as possible, with a small pair of scissors. You should now have a backing of double thick paper in the shape and size of the item to be backed.

Fix the item to the shirt, and from the inside of the shirt re-affix the backing in the pinholes already made, then add the clutch backs. If the backing shows through the front of the shirt, it needs to be trimmed, until its no longer conspicuous.

The human finger secretes an oily fat. This finger residue builds up on your nametag, insignia, and cutouts. As a result they attract and hold dirt. You need to clean this off so the insignia and cutouts will sparkle. A cloth with a little Windex will do just that. A coat of paste car wax will give your nametag a nice sheen, and your cutouts and badges will look like mirrors.

Unless you handle your ribbons wearing gloves, over time, your finger residue will turn them grungy. Wearing grunge ribbons is an offense to your honor – replace them. A note about ribbons: You can do-it-yourself or have them done for you. If you are a do-it-yourselfer, I offer the following tips. Do not buy curved ribbon mounts. They are more trouble than they are worth and don't look good on the shirt, stay with a straight mount if possible. Ribbon devices come with little prongs designed to punch through the ribbon, cut them off. Prongs almost always deform the ribbon or tear it. Use a white glue (such as Elmer's) to fix the device on the ribbon.

Your ribbons can be custom mounted and look super sharp. These ribbons are flawless and one-third the thickness of self-mounted racks. You can check them out at Ultra-Thin Ribbons on the Internet at ultrathin.com. They have a complete line of CAP ribbons. They cost a little more, but you get what you pay for.

Ties, Tacks & Clasps. A lint brush will keep the tie looking good, but have it dry cleaned for spots, stains, or anything else that won't brush out. I prefer the tie tack to the clasp. The clasp never seems to stay in place and always slants up or down. The eye is immediately attracted to the flaw and that spoils the look you want to achieve. Fold the tie so the bottom tip touches the top of the knot; place the tack, centered on the tie, at the fold you just made. Slip the back tail of the tie through the retaining band on the back of the front tail. The back tail also has buttonholes; button the tie to the shirt.

Wearing The Blue Shirt. A white tee shirt is *required* under the blue shirt. Wear the short-sleeved (open collar) shirt with a 'V' necked tee. The long sleeve, is *never* worn open collared, and should be backed with a crew neck tee because a 'V' neck will show through the shirt. The long sleeve also requires a tie.

When dressing, tuck your tee shirt into the waistband of your underwear to keep the blue shirt from riding up. Don't just jam the shirt into the trouser. Keep the fly open and tuck the shirt in. Reach around inside the trousers and pull the shirttails down to straighten them, this makes the shirt more comfortable and minimizes wrinkles.

After closing the fly, the front of the shirt across the top of the slacks, ought to be smooth, but not taut. Place your thumbs between the shirt and trouser and work any wrinkles at the belt line back toward the hips. This gives the shirt a crisp wrinkle free front. Now buckle the belt keeping your 'gig' line in place: the buttoned edge of the shirt, in line with the vertical dent on the belt buckle, in line with the outside edge of the zipper flap.

3. The Blue Belt.

The belt comes in one size, very long, and must be trimmed to length. It also comes in two (2) genders, guys and gals. The gal belt is designed specially to conform to the female waist. To trim the belt put it on with the alligator clasp open so you can slide excess belt through it. Buckle the belt so that the chrome tip is properly aligned with the buckle: no blue showing between the tip and the buckle and no buckle chrome showing under or beyond the metal tip. This is a precise fit.

Now pull the excess belting through the open clasp until the belt fits, and then close the clasp. Use a felt tipped marker to mark the belt about one inch out from the clasp – this is where you'll trim the belt. It's best to cut it long rather than too short; you can always trim it again if you need to. Use a cloth with Windex to make the buckle and tip shine, a coat of car wax is even better.

4. The Blue Trouser.

Trousers should be brushed for lint and dust each time you put them on. Do not launder trousers; it's a dry clean only deal. Do not put a bare iron to the fabric – this causes the cloth to 'shine', which is permanent damage. If you must iron, place a cotton handkerchief between the iron and fabric to prevent shining.

Trousers are sized according to waist and come either in 'L', 'M', or 'S'. This has nothing to do with inseam length! Trouser legs are always very long, unfinished, and must be hemmed. The L (long), M (medium), and S (short) refer to the trousers *rise*, which is the length from the crotch to the belt line. If you have to reach between your knees to zip up your trousers you need a shorter rise. To determine your trouser rise use the following guide:

If you are 5' 7" or shorter the rise is short (S).

If you are 5' 8" to 6' the rise is regular (R) or Medium (M)
If you are 6' 1" or taller the rise is long (L)

The inseam should be hemmed so that the trouser touches the top of the shoe with a slight break in the crease. The back of the leg should be dropped about seven-eighths of an inch, so it covers the back of the shoe, but does not touch the heel of the shoe.

5. Low Quarters.

There are two types of shoes, poromeric (high gloss plastic), and leather. Females ought to purchase male shoes, as do many women in the air force. The male shoe provides better support, better comfort, better protection from heat and cold; they look, shine, and wear better than flimsier female shoes. When wearing shoes, the knot loops and excess lace should be tucked away between the sock and the shoe. This gives the shoe a clean look (no flopping laces) and prevents the knot from loosening. Of course, plain black socks are also required.

6. Shinning Shoes & Boots.

"The quality of an airman is measured by the time, effort, and care invested to shine shoes and boots". USAF NCO Leadership School

Shinning plastic shoes. It's plastic, and like all plastics it attracts dust and develops a grungy film. Carefully remove any dirt or grit that will scratch the gloss finish. Using bare fingers, rub a thin veil of Vaseline over the shoe (including the tongue) to dissolve and carry away the grunge film. Do not use Windex or other detergent cleaners as they only add to the grunge you are trying to eliminate. Wipe away all traces of Vaseline with a soft, dry cloth. Now add a coat of paste car wax and let it dry. Gently buff the shoe with a clean, dry, soft cloth: preferably an old cotton tee shirt or a cloth diaper. Add a second coat.

Shoe waxes, creams, cotton balls & cloths. Before we get to the nuts and bolts of polishing leather shoes, a few comments on the materials you will use are in order. Paste shoe wax comes in several densities for specific uses: there are hard waxes that have a high carnauba wax content and little solvent, there are medium waxes with a balance of wax and solvents, and there are soft waxes with high solvent content.

Allen Edmond's shoe polish is a hard wax and comes in a glass jar. You can get it anywhere Allen Edmond's shoes are sold – generally in a men's clothing store. Hard waxes are not suitable for spit shining, but they will produce an exceptional high gloss shine with proper buffing. Lincoln and Kelly waxes are medium waxes and are very good to spit or buff shine. Kiwi is a soft wax not recommended for a buff shine, but it produces a brilliant spit shine. Kiwi also markets a polish called Parade Gloss. It contains silicone and is difficult to work with, so avoid it until your spit shine skills are well developed.

Shoe creams and dyes are essential. Dyes are coloring agents used to restore the shoe's original color. Creams also contain leather dye, but it also has emollients, which restore and preserve the leather itself. Do not use saddle soaps, mink oil, or spray silicon on your shoes. Shoe cream should be applied after stripping off a spit shine, to prepare the leather for the next spit shine. Use shoe cream occasionally before a buff shine. I prefer Allen Edmond's shoe cream. It comes in a squeeze tube and is labeled as polish – but it's still a cream, and the best available. Straight shoe dyes are required when you over-strip a shoe. Over stripping occurs when you are removing old wax and continue into the top layer of the leather, removing or fading the color dye. Avoid over stripping.

Using the right kind of cloth is essential for a great shine. Cotton is the only cloth suitable for buff and spit shining. Make sure the cloth is 100% cotton – no blends. Be aware that some "cotton" balls are in fact all polyester; polyester will actually remove the wax you are trying to apply. Old tee shirts that have been laundered dozens of times, cotton diapers, and cotton balls produced brilliant shines. One caution about old tee shirts: if you have hard water, then calcium, iron, and detergent residue will be built up in the cloth and it isn't useable. If this is the case, buy cotton diapers.

The water you use also affects the quality of your shine. If you have hard water, or can smell chlorine in it, use bottled water.

The buff shine. This is a quick and easy shine. Use a camel hair shoe brush to buff away any dirt and dust. Apply a coat of black shoe cream and follow the directions. Wrap a tee shirt or diaper around the shoe brush and buff. Add a coat of hard or medium wax using a cotton cloth; do not use an application brush, or the foam pad that sometimes comes with the wax container. Melt the wax with a butane fireplace lighter. You want to use the heat of the flame, but do not touch the flame directly on the wax. All waxes are flammable so use common sense and caution! When the dull wax suddenly develops a sheen it is melted, immediately move on to another area. Allow the wax to cool and then wrap a cloth around your shoe brush and buff the shoe. Hard waxes are not prone to melting and clouding in heat and sunlight like the spit shine does.

The spit shine. There is more to it than wax, water, and a cotton ball. However, properly done, a spit shine will out class the poromeric shoe every time. In the process that follows you *cannot* skip any of the procedures listed, if you do, you will have wasted your time and materials. A first spit shine, from stripping to finish coat, will take about an hour, perhaps two, if your shoes are in bad condition and require additional prepping.

How a spit shine works. You are not shining the leather you are shining the wax! In essence, you are going to settle the wax with motion, dragging it around in little circles. That circular motion also rubs tiny wax particles together, forcing them to buff against each other, producing a brilliant shine. The reason for using water is to keep the wax from sticking to the cloth and to encourage it to stick to

the leather. Water also makes the cotton softer so it doesn't leave tiny scratches on the polished surface.

Stripping. Shoes must be clean. Both new and old shoes ought to be stripped. New ones to remove factory wax, and old ones to remove any existing polish. Cotton terry cloth: an old towel or washcloth, works best for stripping. Lighter fluid will strip the shoe of wax. Dampen the cloth not the shoe with the fluid. When the cloth no longer accumulates wax the shoe is stripped. Lighter fluid is highly flammable! Use common sense and be safety conscious. Shoes can also be striped using a solution of half water and half rubbing alcohol. After stripping restore the leather using a black shoe dye or a shoe cream.

Applying the wax. To use a cloth, put your index and middle fingers together and wrap a double layer of tee shirt around them, so there is a smooth (no wrinkles) flat surface under the fingertips. Dip your fingers into a bowl of water. Your cloth should be wet, but not dripping. Don't allow dry areas of your rag to flop or drag on the surface of the wax. Use the cotton ball by dipping it in water and squeezing out the excess.

The thick coat. This is the foundation of the shine. The most common mistake made by novice spit-shiners is not putting enough wax on the thick coat. Apply a thick coat of wax all over the shoe, tongue included, and let dry 15 minutes. Dab a small amount of wax on a wet cotton ball or tee shirt, and gently buff the thick coat working in small circles until a hazy shine develops. Do not buff the wax to a complete shine! Keep adding fresh wax over the hazy shine, until a base coat develops. Work your way around the shoe with each layer of wax, this will ensure uniform coverage and uniform shine.

Base coats. After adding several layers of wax you will feel the base coat develop. You'll know when the base coat is finished because suddenly, the drag on your cloth or cotton ball will go away and the surface will feel smooth as glass – it's still hazy, but the base coat is finished. Now you can buff the wax to a clear and complete shine, or add additional coats.

Dealing with 'flake'. Spit shined wax will flake off the flex creases in the shoe leather. It sparkles like little shards of glass. Spit shined wax is cohesive and *all* of it will flake off, right down to the leather. During the spit shine process some will put the shoe on and 'walk it out' removing flake as it builds up, others wait till the shine is finished. You can pull the flakes off with your wet cloth or cotton ball, or work it back into the shine. Put a couple of thin coats of wax on the flex creases and develop to a clear shine. As there is no thick or base coat on the creases, the wax will not flake, and still have some shine to it.

Maintaining a spit shine. After wearing spit shined shoes they will have dust or dirt on them. Wrap a cloth around a shoe brush and gently buff the shoe clean. Then add another coat of wax. A spit shine will sometimes melt or cloud over in hot weather or when standing too long in the sun. Clouding occurs because heat and sunlight will vaporize solvents captured in the wax. Just buff and add a coat of

wax. Scuffs and scraps are repairable by filling the defect with wax, let it dry, and then add a finish coat or two over it.

Shoeshine tips:

On the flex creases in the shoe do not apply wax in circles, instead work back and forth in the direction of the crease. This will minimize the tendency of the crease to 'flake' the wax when the shoe is worn, and limit the spread of flaking when it occurs.

When you finish the spit shine sop up remaining beads of water on the surface of the wax, or they will dry and leave water spots.

Remove the shoelaces before you start and polish the entire shoe, not just the toes, including the tongue. Rinse the laces to wash away dust and dirt. Replace the laces after shinning.

Always finish the job with a coat of black edge dressing on the sides of the sole and heels.

Your spit shine will get better and better, and take less and less time, as you gain experience. There are few things as gratifying as that mirror finish on your shoes or boots – Good Luck!

Blisters. While on the topic of shoes I think a few words on blistering may be helpful. Blisters occur because the shoe or boot does not fit properly, isn't broken in, or the wrong kind of sock is being worn. When purchasing shoes or boots get your *exact* size by having your feet properly measured. Some boots, such as Corcoran's will feel tight in the correct size. That is because the leather is designed to stretch into an exact fit to your foot – they require a break in period. Wearing the wrong socks is discussed below in the BDU section. To help a new pair of boots break in, put them on, then get them soaking wet (the shower is a good place for that). Wear them for a while wet, preferably walking around, then set them aside to dry.

To prevent blistering pre-tape those areas on your foot that are prone to blisters. Use band-aids or white medical adhesive tape. Then wear two pair of socks; a pair of low quarter socks under your boot socks works well. This re-directs the blister producing friction away from your skin.

7. Refreshing your uniform.

When wearing your uniform it will accumulate lint, dust, and a few wrinkles. Unless you've trashed it and need to send it to the laundry; just a little brushing, touch-up ironing, cleaning buckles and insignia, and fresh wax on your shoes is all that is required for the next wear.

Preparing & Wearing The Battle Dress Uniform

There are two (2) ways of wearing the BDU in the Air Force: field or base. On base, many of the preparations for the blue uniform also apply to the BDU; heavy starch, spit shined boots etc. For field wear in the Air Force the BDU is never starched nor are boots spit shined. This is because the BDU comes with a special treatment to reduce its infrared signature (unless you *want* to light up like a Christmas Tree in a night vision scope). Starching will intensify the BDU infrared signature. The same with spit shined boots; but I don't foresee that is a problem in CAP. The important thing is to look professional, even if you're off to crawl through the mud - you should never report for duty in the BDU looking like you already did.

Boot droop & blousing. Blousing the trouser too long causes boot droop. This is excessive trouser length hanging down over the boot. The trouser legs should be bloused to the top of the boot, with an extra inch or so, to allow for sitting. Bootlace excess should not be wrapped around the top of the boot. When the laces are tied, tuck the knot loops and lace ends in between your sock and the inside top of the boot.

There are two types of blousing bands. The expansion, or stretch band, has been around since WWII. I don't use it because it wants to roll up when sitting, and it cuts off the circulation to my feet. The alternative is the blousing band. The band is about 2 inches wide and fastens together with Velcro ends. To use the bands you first turn the BDU trouser inside out, slide your feet into the bottom of the inside out legs, put on your boots, place the band around the inside out leg at the top of the boot, and pull up the trousers. It takes a little practice before you find the right length. Length can be adjusted by sliding the end of the trouser up or down the calf of your leg. Of course you can just tuck the excess trouser length inside the boot.

Boot socks. *Never* wear cotton athletic socks in military boots! They make your feet sweat (I think that's why we call them sweat socks), promote microbe and fungal growth inside the boot, and almost guarantees you blisters! Wear wool or wool blend socks designed for boots. Now there are polypropylene socks, that 'wick' moisture away from your feet, and some are temperature rated for hot or cold environments. Now, there is a polypropylene over sock which slides over an under sock.

Cap stiffener. Every BDU cap ought to have a stiffener, which forces the cap to keep its shape.

BDU Belt. The standard issue web belt really isn't up to the job for BDU wear. Replace it with a 1-3/4 inch leather garrison belt, plain black, with silver buckle. These belts can be obtained from any police uniform store. Or get a nylon parachute riggers belt, sold by many military supply stores. A pair of BDU braces (suspenders) is also useful. They come in black, olive drab, and camouflage.

This concludes my primer on uniforms. I hope you find it useful. I would remind all seniors who wear the CAP uniform in lieu of the Air Force uniform that all the principles presented here can also be applied to the CAP uniform – try it, you’ll be amazed.

Remember when we started? You put the blue uniform on, looked into the mirror, and inspected yourself. If you have completed all the preparations recommended here, do it again. Looking good? You Bet! Proud? You should be!

Questions, suggestions, comments? Please email me at afchief@earthlink.net

CIVIL AIR PATROL
78th Cadet Squadron (East Iowa)

UNIFORM INSPECTION CHECK LIST

CADET: _____ INSPECTOR: _____ DATE: _____

BLUE UNIFORM

Item	Out of Uniform	Standard	Outstanding
Hair	Dirty Uncombed Touching Ears Touching Collar Blocked Cut	Clean Combed Tapered Medium Cut	Cut Short High & Tight
Service Cap	Unauthorized Missing Insignia Too Large/Small Lint-Dust-Stains	Clean Proper Fit Worn Properly	Insignia Polished Polished Bill Polished Chin Strap
Flight Cap Beret	Unauthorized Too Large/Small Lint-Dust-Stains Missing Insignia Insignia incorrectly placed	Clean Proper Fit Insignia Correctly Placed Properly Worn	Insignia Polished
Shirt	Unauthorized Too Large/Small Faded Frayed or torn Missing Buttons Unbuttoned pockets Dirt or Stains Wrinkles	Clean Proper fit Pressed	Loose threads clipped Starched Tailored Pockets Sewn Down
Collar Insignia	Unauthorized Missing Incorrectly placed	Correctly placed	Polished
Badges	Unauthorized Incorrectly Placed	Correctly Placed	Properly Backed Polished
Ribbons	Unauthorized Incorrectly Placed Out of Precedence Frayed – torn - dirty	Correctly Placed In Precedence Clean	Properly Backed Custom Mounted
Wing Patch	Missing Incorrectly Placed Creased off-Center	Correctly Placed 39-1	Centered on Sleeve Crease cuts patch in half
Name Tag	Missing Incorrectly Placed Dirty	Correctly Placed	Properly Backed Polished
Belt	Unauthorized Missing Untrimmed Dirty or Frayed Scratched Buckle Out of Gig-Line	Proper Gig-Line Clean Buckle & Tip	Buckle & Tip Polished

Trousers	Unauthorized Waist to Large/Small Improperly Hemmed Inseam too long or short Faded – Stained Lint-Dust-Dirt Wrinkled Iron Shine	Proper Fit Touches top of shoe with slight break in crease Proper Hem Clean Pressed	Back drops 7/8” to cover Shoe without touching Heel
Socks	Missing Unauthorized Dirty	Clean	
Shoes	Unauthorized Dirty Unpolished Toes only Polished	Clean Polished	Poromeric Waxed Leather Spit Shined Edge Dressing Laces Stowed

BATTLE DRESS

Item	Out of Uniform	Standard	Outstanding
BDU Cap Squadron Cap	Unauthorized Too Large/Small Faded Dirty - Stained	Proper Fit Clean	BDU Cap has Stiffener
BDU Blouse	Unauthorized Too Large/Small Dirty – Stained Torn Wrinkles Missing Buttons Unbuttoned Pockets Faded more than 2-shades	Clean Buttons Buttoned Pressed	Starched
Cloth Tapes Badges Patches	Unauthorized Missing Incorrectly Placed Tapes have clipped off ends	Correctly Placed Tape ends are folded under	
BDU Trousers	Unauthorized Waist Too Large/Small Dirty – Stained Torn Wrinkles Missing Buttons Unbuttoned Pockets Faded more than 2-shades Un-bloused Legs	Clean Pressed Bloused with no Boot Droop	Starched
Boots	Unauthorized Dirty Unpolished	Polished Laces Stowed	