

Some Common Drill Mistakes

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This document is one of several documents that discuss drill problems that need improvement at COWG Encampment. The official reference for all drill and ceremonies procedures is AFMAN 36-2203, also known as the D&C Manual. The new CAP Pamphlet 60-33, CAP Drill & Ceremonies is CAP's equivalent to the Air Force Manual.

Read it, Teach it, Do it! We face a major drill problem, throughout CAP. Many cadets, teaching drill, have not read the D&C Manual. A lack of understanding or lack of knowledge of correct procedures results in incorrect instruction. This leads to the perpetuation of drill mistakes.

We will not allow this to happen at COWG Encampment. The encampment flight staff must be, or become, experts. We will require that cadet line staff obtain and read the D&C Manual thoroughly, teach procedures as described in the manual using the six-step process, and execute the maneuvers correctly. This process must begin **before** encampment. We will **READ IT, TEACH IT, DO IT!**

Change Step, MARCH – This is near the top of my list of worst executed drill commands. This is due to the various **incorrect** techniques used to teach the maneuver. There is the “skipping” technique. There is the “kicking” technique. There are all sorts of variations of “hopping”, “skipping”, and “jumping” techniques. There are three problems with all of these techniques: (1) They are all wrong, (2) they are not necessary, and (3) they look terrible when executed. Execute the maneuver exactly as described in the D&C Manual and it is **simple** to accomplish. Problems only occur when using some of the various bad techniques. **Read it, Teach it, Do it!** There should be no “technique” required.

Improper Flight Alignment Arm Extension “Techniques” – During flight drill, there is usually a lot of “arm extension” movement with cadets sticking their arms out toward the cadet in front of them when adjusting alignment. There is no situation in the D&C Manual that states that cadets **ever** extend their arms forward. These movements are wrong and accomplish nothing. There are only **two situations** where cadets extend their arms to the horizontal position during drill. (1) **Dress Right, DRESS** in line formation, and (2) **Dress Left, DRESS** in inverted line formation. In these cases, cadets extend an arm laterally to establish **Interval**. Cadets will **never** extend an arm in the forward direction to establish Distance – **ever! Extending arms forward to establish Distance is not procedure and it is wrong!** Here is why. Distance is 40 inches, measured from the chest of a cadet to the back of the cadet in front. With the possible exception of NBA basketball players, arm reach **is never** 40 inches! My arm reach is a measured 29 inches, not 40 inches, and I am six feet tall! I will assert that no cadet or senior staff member at encampment will have a 40 inch reach! Establish distance **visually!** I have witnessed an even worse technique. I once saw a cadet remove his flight cap and hold it in his extended arm to establish distance. When asked why he was doing this, his answer was – you guessed it. “That’s the way we are taught in my squadron”. Go figure!

Count Cadence, COUNT – This is another candidate for the “top five” worst executed maneuvers list. **Cadets do not “sing” when counting cadence.** You know exactly what I mean. You have heard it before. The following is from the D&C manual.

*“...the group counts cadence for eight steps, as follows: ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR; ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR. Do not shout the counts. Give them **sharply** and **clearly**, and separate each number distinctly.”*

Each count should be at the **same pitch** and at a conversational voice level!

Call the command correctly – “CountCadence” is called as if it were one word. The last syllable of “CountCadence” is called as the left foot hits the ground. The command of execution is called the next time the left heel strikes the ground.

Counting Cadence – Counting cadence is different from the **Count Cadence, COUNT** command. The instructor counts cadence to keep a unit in step. When cadets get out of step, the instructor either corrects them individually, counts cadence, or halts the unit and then moves them off in step. Counting cadence helps teach coordination and rhythm. Cadence is given in sets of two as follows: **HUT, TOOP, THREEP, FOURP; HUT, TOOP, THREEP, FOURP, without singing or altering tone**. To help keep in step, unit members should keep their heads up and watch the head and shoulders of the person directly in front of them. When units are untrained and inexperienced, cadence counting should be clear and simple. More experienced units are able to stay in step without constant reminder, and leaders should encourage the use of marching songs or Jodies.

Author’s Note: Re-emphasizing, each word of the cadence count should be at the same pitch and volume. Speak each word of the cadence count with “snap” and no singing.

ATTENTION – The most common statement made by flight sergeants at encampment is “Stop looking around!” Some of the student cadets may be silently thinking, “Why not? What’s wrong with looking around? Nobody told me I couldn’t do that”. If you are surprised that some of them may be thinking these things, you are guilty of making a bad assumption.

Has anyone ever explained to the cadets **why** remaining motionless with eyes “caged” at ATTENTION is important? If so, you may be making a bad assumption. In drill, the position of ATTENTION is the ultimate test of self-discipline and military bearing. Do the cadets even **understand** that they are not supposed to look around? Explain the requirements of the position. Flight sergeants and flight commanders sometimes make incorrect assumptions about student cadets’ level of knowledge of drill. Encampment may be the **first time** they have had the requirements of ATTENTION explained correctly or enforced.

The REAL secrets to maintaining the position of ATTENTION are self-discipline and will power. If you **want** to do it properly, you **can** do it properly. The next big secret is that you **must** do the right thing with your eyes. Pick or imagine an object about 1000 feet in front of you and stare at it. De-focus your eyes and do not allow your eye focus to change, for any reason! While at ATTENTION, **never** **never** **never** make eye contact with anyone! If anyone is in front of you, **stare right through them – not at them and don’t allow your eyes to focus on them!** Proper training by flight staff and providing motivation to student cadets is the key to ensure that cadets **want** to maintain the position of ATTENTION properly.

Parade, REST – This position may be slightly more relaxing than ATTENTION.

From the D&C Manual:

*“The command is **Parade, REST**. On the command **REST**, the cadet airman will raise the left foot from the hip just enough to clear the ground and move it smartly to the left so the heels are 12 inches apart, as measured from the inside of the heels. Keep the legs straight, but not stiff, and the heels on line. As the left foot moves, bring the arms, fully extended, to the back of the body, un-cupping the hands in the process; and extend and join the fingers, pointing them toward the ground. The palms will face outwards. Place the right hand in the palm of the left, right thumb over the left to form an “X”. Keep head and eyes straight ahead, and remain silent and immobile.”*

Parade, REST – Common problems. Failure to move arms and legs with “snap”. Not keeping fingers extended. Left hand in right rather than right hand in left. Arms not fully extended and hands too high. This creates space between elbows and body (called “windows”). **We are not in the Marine Corps**. The movement to and from the position of **Parade, REST** is not the same as the lazy movement to **At Ease**. The movement to **Parade, REST** must be made sharply and with snap.

The only difference between **Parade, REST** and **ATTENTION** is the position of legs and arms. **Parade, REST** requires silence and immobility as with **ATTENTION**. Those conducting drill instructions need to check hand position and finger extension. **Parade, REST** is not At Ease.

Other Common Drill Problems

All maneuvers - Lack of “Snap” during drill movements. “Lazy” movements are not acceptable. **Examples:** Head pivots during **Eyes, RIGHT** or **Eyes, LEFT** and **Ready, FRONT** should be sharp and precise (with Snap). Raising and lowering arms and head pivots during **Dress Right, DRESS** or **Dress Left, DRESS** and **Ready, FRONT** should be sharp and precise (with Snap)

Arm Pinning – Many drill maneuvers state that “the upper body portion of the body remains at the position of **ATTENTION**” for all or a portion of the maneuver. Keeping the upper portion of the body at the position of attention means suspending arm swing and “pinning” the arms to the side as in the position of **ATTENTION**.

Here are some examples of maneuvers requiring the arms to be pinned: **To The Rear, MARCH**, All Facing Maneuvers (Right, Left, About, Half-Right, Half-Left) Flanking Maneuvers, Column Maneuvers (only those executing 90 degree should suspend arm swing during column maneuvers. All others maintain coordinated arm-swing)

Flight Formation While Marching - The normal formation for marching is in column of at least two, but not more than four, elements abreast. The element leaders march at the head of their elements.

The flight marches in line **only** for minor changes of position. Marching in inverted line is **only** for minor changes of position. Marching in inverted column is acceptable for short distances; however, nothing good can come from marching in inverted column for an extended period. When in inverted column, avoid column maneuvers since the guide and element leaders are in the rear of the formation. Flanking maneuvers, **To The Rear, MARCH**, and **Flight, HALT** are about the only things you should attempt.

Commands Called on Wrong Foot – This is quite common during first couple of days of encampment; however, this needs to improve rapidly. Generally, call commands on the foot in the direction of the movement.

Call all commands on the correct foot but also place emphasis on the correct words of the command. From the D&C Manual: (underlining is mine)

*“2.4.2. When marching, give commands for executing movements to the right when the right foot strikes the ground; give commands for executing movements to the left when the left foot strikes the ground. **In commands containing two or more words, place the point of emphasis on the last word.** For example, in Right Flank, give the command Flank as the right foot hits the ground.”*

The procedure in the example for Right Flank, above, is used in for preparatory commands if the preparatory command contains more than one work. i.e., Column maneuvers, Flanking maneuvers, **Mark Time, MARCH, Count Cadence, COUNT, Half Step, MARCH**, etc.

Right Step, MARCH and **Left Step, MARCH** and **Flight, HALT** from right or left step – Call the preparatory command and the command of execution when the feet are together. (Appropriate one-step pause between the commands)

Column of Files – The correct informational command is “Column of Files from the right (left)” and **not** “Column of Files from the right to the left” (or vice versa). Element leaders turn their heads 45 degrees when giving the **Forward** or **STAND FAST** command. Element leaders keep their heads turned until after giving their element the command Forward, March. If executing column of files from the left, look over the left shoulder. If executing column of files from the right, look over the right shoulder. If the flight is in column with the guide in front of the last element and the planned command is “Column of Files from the Left”, the first sergeant or flight commander must delay giving the **MARCH** command until the guide has posted left in front of the first element leader. Upon hearing the informational command, the guide will automatically post in front of what will be the lead element.

Arms held too stiff at Attention and during arm swing while marching – At Attention, arms should be straight but not stiff. Do not lick elbows. While marching, arms should be straight, but not stiff, and swing naturally. Flight staff must address the problem if a cadet’s arms look unnatural while marching. Unnatural arm swings draw the attention of observers.

Problems with the FALL OUT command – The D&C Manual states:

*“On the command **FALL OUT**, individuals may relax in a standing position or break ranks. They must remain in the immediate area, and no specific method of dispersal is required. Moderate speech is permitted.”*

This procedure contains no mention of taking a step backward and executing an **About, FACE**. There is no mention of shouting anything. Requiring cadets to do anything other than the D&C description of FALL OUT is not necessary and may possibly be incorrect. For example, what if a cadet simply **wants** to “*relax in a standing position*”? Can you direct them to do something else even though the **FALL OUT** procedure allows it? You can do that; however, *never imply that it is part of the procedure!*

