

Command Voice Errors and Correctly Called Commands

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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 60-20, 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!**

Calling Commands Properly

We will start this discussion by reviewing the *correct* way to call commands. Review the following from CAP Pamphlet 60-20, CAP Drill and Ceremonies. I have emphasized some items with bold print or underlining for emphasis.

“A drill command is an oral order. A normal command has two parts and is called a **two-part command**. Most commands are two part commands (i.e. **Right FACE; Forward, MARCH**).”

Parts of a command - Most drill commands have two parts, the **preparatory command** and the **command of execution**. In this pamphlet, the first letter of preparatory command is capitalized and printed in boldface (**Squadron**), and the command of execution is printed in all caps and boldface (**ATTENTION**).

Two Part Commands - The preparatory command explains what the movement will be. When calling a unit to attention or halting a unit's march, the preparatory command includes the unit's designation. In the command **Flight, HALT**, the word **Flight** is the preparatory command. At the same time, it designates the unit. In other preparatory commands, the command tells the unit what they will do next, as in **Left, FACE**.

The command of execution follows the preparatory command. The command of execution designates when the movement will be carried out. In **Forward, MARCH**, the command of execution is **MARCH**. Upon hearing the command of execution, cadets start marching forward.

Combined Commands - In combined commands, the preparatory command and the command of execution are **combined into one command**, for example: **FALL IN, AT EASE**, and **REST**. These commands are given at a **uniformly high pitch and a louder volume** than that of a normal command of execution. There is no preparatory command or command of execution.

Author's Note – It should be clear from the previous paragraph that these combined commands are commands of execution. Therefore, call these commands at a ***uniformly high pitch. A properly delivered command of execution has no inflection*** (i.e., pitch change) If a combined command has two words, both words must be given at a uniformly high pitch with no inflection! **In other words – no pitch change!** Although not specifically listed in the examples, the

commands **FALL OUT**, and **REPORT** are in this category and should be given at uniformly high pitch and louder volume, as well.

Continuing from CAPP 60-20,

“Supplementary commands - Supplementary commands are given by subordinate leaders when one unit of the element must execute a movement different from the other units, or must execute the same movement at a different time, or to echo the preparatory command given by a higher level commander. Examples are **CONTINUE THE MARCH, STAND FAST, or Squadron (Flight), ATTENTION**, where “Flight” is the supplementary command.

Informational commands - These have no preparatory command or command of execution, and they are not supplementary. They are used by a senior commander to give direction to junior commanders. Two examples are **PREPARE FOR INSPECTION**, and **DISMISS THE SQUADRON**.

General Rules for Commands - When giving commands, the leader is at the position of attention. Good military bearing is necessary for good leadership. While marching, the leader must be in step with the formation at all times. When the unit is in a rest position, present arms, or executing other positions other than the position of attention, the leader returns to the position of attention to give the next command. In these cases, they do not execute the command with the unit. In other cases, the leader executes the command with the flight. Examples are **Forward, MARCH**, where the leader steps off at the same time the flight does and **Right Step, MARCH**, where the leader executes side steps along with the flight, actually executing Left Step to mirror the flight. When teaching drill, a leader need not execute commands with the flight if it detracts from his instruction.

The way a command is given affects the way the movement is executed. A correctly delivered command is loud and distinct enough for everyone in the element to hear. It is given in a tone, cadence, and snap that demand a willing, correct, and immediate response. A voice with the right qualities of loudness, projection, distinctness, inflection, and snap enables a commander to obtain effective results as shown below.

Loudness - This is the volume used in giving a command. It should be adjusted to the distance and number of individuals in the formation. The commander takes a position in front of, and centered on, the unit and facing the unit so his or her voice reaches all individuals. Speak loudly enough for all to hear, but do not strain the vocal cords.

Projection - This is the ability of your voice to reach whatever distance is desired without undue strain. To project the command, focus your voice on the person farthest away. Counting in a full, firm voice and giving commands at a uniform cadence while prolonging the syllables are good exercises. Erect posture, proper breathing, a relaxed throat, and an open mouth help project the voice.

Distinctness - This depends on the correct use of the tongue, lips, and teeth to form the separate sounds of a word and to group those sounds to form words. Distinct commands are effective; indistinct commands cause confusion. Emphasize clear enunciation.

Inflection - *This is the change in pitch of the voice.* Pronounce the preparatory command - the command that announces the movement - with a *rising inflection near or at the end of its completion, usually the last syllable.* *When beginning a preparatory command, the most desirable pitch of voice is near the level of the natural speaking voice.* A common fault is to start the preparatory command so high

that, after employing a rising inflection, the passage to a higher pitch for the command of execution is impossible without undue strain. *A properly delivered command of execution has no inflection. However, it should be given at a higher pitch than the preparatory command.*

The command of execution is pronounced at a higher pitch than the preparatory command because a human's normal reaction to higher pitched sounds is to act immediately. Leaders should take care to begin their preparatory command at a low register so that they are not squeaking when they get to the command of execution.

It should be noted that the word **Flight** when used before **Tench HUT** (Attention) is said at a higher pitch than **Tench**. This is because the word **Flight** is designed to catch the attention of Airmen who may not be paying attention since they are at a position of rest. Once their attention has been gained, the rest of the command is given with the normal pitch rules.

Snap. This is that extra quality in a command that demands immediate response. It expresses confidence and decisiveness. It indicates complete control of yourself and the situation. To achieve this quality, you must have knowledge of commands and the ability to voice them effectively. *Give the command of execution at the precise instant the heel of the proper foot strikes the ground while marching.* Achieve snap in giving commands by standing erect, breathing without effort, and speaking clearly.

Pronunciation of Commands. Some commands often sound very different from how the words would normally be said.

HARCH - The command of execution **MARCH** is always pronounced **HARCH** in order to allow the leader to project their voice without damaging their vocal cords. To pronounce the **M** sound, the mouth must be closed, which does not allow air to escape the mouth as the vocal cords vibrate to create the sound. When combined with the sudden burst of air from the diaphragm that is necessary for loudness and projection, a back pressure develops in the throat that can damage the vibrating vocal cords. This often leads to a hoarseness that makes it difficult to give commands properly later on. After prolonged use over a couple of days, the leader may even lose their voice altogether. By replacing the **M** sound with an **H**, the mouth is now open when the sudden burst of air exits the throat, and the vocal cords are not vibrating (which is when damage is most likely). This allows the air to leave naturally without doing damage. The resulting command of execution will also be louder and projected further.

HARMS - By placing an **H** sound at the beginning of **ARMS**, the leader can protect their vocal cords and project the command safely. If you begin with the **A** sound, the vocal cords are tightened and vibrating at the very moment the sudden burst of air comes up from the leader's diaphragm. This can cause the leader to lose their voice gradually or in some cases immediately. By adding an **H** sound at the beginning, the sudden burst of air necessary for snap, projection and loudness is already past the throat by the time the **A** sound occurs, thus protecting the leader's voice.

Hawlt/Step. Pronouncing **HALT** with a **W** sound in the middle forces the leader to open their mouth wider than natural, which allows them to project their voice further without damage. Although not part of a command of execution, pronouncing Step as **Steph** does the same thing.

Tench HUT. Attention is pronounced **Tench HUT**, with **Tench** acting as a sort of "unofficial" preparatory command and **HUT** being the actual command of execution.

This avoids using the **A** sound at the beginning, which may damage the vocal cords when trying to project. By saying **HUT** instead of **SHUN**, the leader avoids the longer hissing sound that lacks the proper snap for a command of execution. With the proper burst of air from the diaphragm, **HUT** becomes almost a cough, and everyone knows exactly when to move.

Structure of Commands. In military drill, each command has a specific number of syllables, a certain cadence, and certain vowels. The combination of these three aspects makes each command sound completely different even in less than optimum conditions. When an Airman cannot hear the command clearly, they can often guess the right command because of its distinctive rhythm. Theoretically, a leader could mumble the commands and the Airmen would be able to figure out what they wanted anyway.

Cadence - Cadence is the measure or beat of movement. *Commanders must match the rhythm of their commands with the cadence of their unit. The interval that produces the best effect in a movement is the one that allows one step between the preparatory command and the command of execution.* In some instances, you should lengthen the interval enough to permit proper understanding of the movement to be executed and allow for supplementary commands when necessary. Measure the interval exactly in the beat of the drill cadence.

Timing of Commands - 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 Column Right, MARCH, start the command Column slightly before the right foot hits the ground, so the word Right is given when the right foot hits the ground.* This also aids significantly to ensuring the inflection of the preparatory command is rising.

For a squadron or larger unit, the interval between the squadron or group commander's preparatory command and the command of execution should be long enough to allow the marching elements to take three steps between commands."

Command Voice Inflection and Timing Problems

Two common problems that are observed in drill commands are improper command inflection (pitch changes) and improper command timing.

We are going to review two paragraphs from the information above.

"Pronounce the preparatory command - the command that announces the movement - with a rising inflection near or at the end of its completion, usually the last syllable. When beginning a preparatory command, the most desirable pitch of voice is near the level of the natural speaking voice."

...In commands containing two or more words, place the point of emphasis on the last word. For example, in "Column Right, MARCH", start the command "Column" slightly before the right foot hits the ground, so the word "Right" is given when the right foot hits the ground. This also aids significantly to ensuring the inflection of the preparatory command is rising.

While thinking about the two paragraphs above, think about inflection and time as you practice giving the following commands. I recommend giving the commands while at Mark Time. Each of these is a two-part command. Are you calling the preparatory command using a rising inflection near or at the end of the completion of the preparatory command? Are you

calling the preparatory command in one count with emphasis on the last syllable as your foot hits the ground, taking another step, and then giving the command of execution on the next step? Each of these commands is called in that manner. Pay particular attention when calling “**Count Cadence, COUNT**”. Many cadets call this command incorrectly

Forward, March

Parade, REST

Right Flank, MARCH

Left Flank, MARCH

Column Right, MARCH

Column Left, MARCH

Half Step, MARCH

Count Cadence, COUNT

To The Rear, MARCH

Change Step, MARCH

Mark Time, MARCH

These are a few examples. If you are not calling these commands correctly, there are likely others that you need to correct!