

PROPERLY FORMING THE FLIGHT

By Lieutenant Colonel Buddy McCormick, COWG Encampment Commander

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!**

Form the Flight Properly - Proper flight drill begins with properly forming the flight! Before forming the flight at encampment, select a temporary guide and three element leaders. Announce that these are *temporary* positions until time is available to select final choices. A guide and element leaders are necessary to form the flight at encampment. This allows the student cadets to *begin* drill practice with a guide and designated element leaders.

There are four steps in forming the flight. (1) Falling In, (2) Aligning the flight, (3) Squaring the flight, (4) Sizing the flight.

Do not select road guards until after properly squaring and sizing the flight. At that time, select road guards from the first and third elements.

Accomplishing steps one (1) and two (2) is *simultaneous* during the **FALL IN** maneuver. The automatic **Dress Right, DRESS** portion of the **FALL IN** maneuver initially aligns the flight. This assumes that the **FALL IN** and **Dress Right, DRESS** execution is correct. Unfortunately, this is usually not the case when forming a new flight.

Dress Right, DRESS is an *integral part* of the **FALL IN** procedure. However, cadets perform this **Dress Right, DRESS**, automatically and independently rather than simultaneously. It is critical to ensure that each cadet learns how to perform **Dress Right, DRESS** very early in the drill instruction process. If they do not know how to perform this procedure, you will continue to have problems with the **FALL IN** process.

Before continuing with the discussion of squaring and sizing the flight, it is important to ensure that student cadets understand the **Dress Right, DRESS** portion of the **FALL IN** procedure.

My recommendation for handling this situation follows. Keep in mind that this is *my technique* for ensuring that student cadets understand the **FALL IN** procedure and the automatic **Dress, Right, DRESS** in an efficient manner. This *is not* the only way to teach the procedures; however, this one does work! Once the flight understands and can execute the procedures, it should not be necessary to teach the complete procedure again. Once again, this is a *recommendation*. Other methods are acceptable as long as the six-step teaching method is used.

1. After selecting a temporary guide and three temporary element leaders, give the command to **FALL IN**. For this first time, just accept what you get. This is not the time to make too many corrections or to use excessively high intensity. Assist in getting the flight into correct positions

with proper alignment. If you are lucky, the flight will do a reasonably good job the first time. For some student cadets, this may be the *first time* to receive *correct* instruction for the **FALL IN** procedure!

2. Instruct the **Dress Right, DRESS** procedure. Ensure that the first element is using proper procedures to establish interval. Ensure that the cadets in the other elements align directly behind the first element and that they cannot attain their final position until the first element is in place and correctly aligned. Ensure that cadets in the other elements know their extended arms may not contact the adjacent cadet. Be certain they know what to do with their arms if not in fingertip contact with the adjacent cadet. Be certain that each cadet understands which cadets are responsible for how to move to establish alignment. Be precise and correct flight and individual errors until you are satisfied with performance.

3. At this point, instruct the flight that *every time* they **FALL IN** they will execute, individually and automatically, the **Dress Right, DRESS** and **Ready, FRONT** procedures they just learned. ***There can be no exceptions!***

4. Have the flight **FALL OUT** and then give the **FALL IN** command. Correct errors and repeat the procedure until cadets execute **FALL IN** without errors. Look for sharpness and “Snap” during execution.

5. You will be repeating **FALL IN** and **FALL OUT** several times during this process. Ensure that the cadets do not execute any *unnecessary techniques* during the **FALL OUT** procedure.

During the remainder of encampment, ***immediately correct any errors*** during the **FALL IN** or **FALL OUT** procedures. Point out errors, have the cadets **FALL OUT**, and **FALL IN** again. Repeat as often as necessary!

Address these Issues as Necessary – The D&C Manual states:

“On this command, the guide takes a position facing the flight sergeant and to the flight sergeants left so the first element will fall in centered on and three paces from the flight sergeant”.

The guide establishes the position *visually* – not by pacing off distance from the flight sergeant. For training purposes, it may be acceptable for the guide to pace off the distance the *first time* the flight executes **FALL IN**. After the first time, require the guide to establish position visually.

The most common mistake when executing **FALL IN** is failure of every cadet to perform the automatic **Dress Right, DRESS** and **Ready, FRONT** that are an integral part of **FALL IN**.

Another common mistake is failure of the flight members to understand their position-specific role for achieving correct alignment during the **FALL IN** process. The procedure is very specific in the D&C Manual. Problems arise due to confusion about the process. Although all flight members, with the exception of the last cadet in each element, extend arms horizontally (parallel to the ground), only the *guide and first element members must establish fingertip contact* to the shoulder of the cadet on the left. Remember that the guide is in the correct position and does not move from his position. The first element leader must establish position off of the guide. The process continues with the cadet to the left of the element leader and works down the element. The remaining flight members establish interval by aligning directly behind the cadet in the first element *but only after those cadets have stopped moving*. For the elements behind the first element, fingertips may or may not touch the shoulders of the cadet on the left. Be certain to train what each cadet should do regarding hand position during the automatic **Dress Right,**

DRESS and **Ready, FRONT**. There is no pushing and shoving involved at any time. Emphasize the need for “snap” during all movements!

Element Leaders *visually* establish 40-inch *distance*. *Extending arms straight ahead is not procedure and does not establish a 40-inch distance*.

After you teach the **FALL IN** procedures in this manner, there should be *zero tolerance* for errors during **FALL IN** and **Dress Right, DRESS** procedures for the rest of encampment.

Square the Flight - Once the flight understands and executes the **FALL IN** procedure, square the flight using these procedures:

Once it is formed, the flight will be squared off prior to sizing. The left flank of the formation will be squared off with extra Airmen filling in from the last to the first element. This discussion assumes three elements. For example, if there is one extra Airman, he or she will be positioned in the last element; if there are two extra Airmen, one will be positioned in the last element and one will be positioned in the second element. When at the POST, the flight sergeant will occupy the last position in the last element.

Size the Flight – Once the flight is squared, size the flight using these procedures.

PURPOSE: To arrange Airmen from shortest to tallest within the flight. To size the flight, the flight commander or flight sergeant faces the flight to the right (from line to column formation) and has taller personnel (except the guide and element leaders) move to the front of the flight according to height. The flight commander or flight sergeant then faces the flight to the right (from column to inverted line formation) and again has taller personnel move to the front according to height. The flight commander faces the flight back to the left (column formation) and continues this procedure until all members are properly sized.

During the sizing procedure, you will execute at least three facing maneuvers after the flight Falls In. (1) Right face to Column, (2) Right Face to Inverted Line, (3) Left Face back to Column. After each facing maneuver, taller cadets replace shorter cadets in front of them, except that element leaders and guide remain in position when back in Column. This process will result in the tallest element leader being in the last element.

Once you select the permanent guide and element leaders, square and size the flight again. Emphasize that from this point forward, each flight member will be in the same position each time the flight falls in.

IS THERE ANY WAY TO FALL IN OTHER THAN IN LINE FORMATION?

Situation: The flight sergeant needs to have the flight **FALL IN** but for some reason, line formation does not seem appropriate. Possible situations:

- There may not be enough room for line formation. Column formation might work better.
- The flight needs to proceed along a narrow path or sidewalk that is not wide enough for all of the elements to march side by side.
- You need to have your flight in a single file due to space or operational considerations.

In cases like this, what are your options for **FALL IN** using *other* than line formation?

THERE ARE NO OTHER OPTIONS!

The D&C Manual only makes provisions for falling in using line formation. Quoting from the D&C, paragraph 4.3.1

“A flight forms in at least two, but not more than four, elements in line formation. The command is “FALL IN”.

If you think you can fall in using some other formation, **and** if you can find the procedure in the D&C manual, you are welcome to fall in that way. ***If you cannot find it in the manual, do not do it!***

Think about what you need to have the flight do. Then think of a way to do it **without** the **FALL IN** procedure. There is usually a solution that will not be in conflict with the D&C Manual!

FALL IN Problems – Sometimes flight sergeants use a “countdown” to try to expedite the **FALL IN** process. Controlling the amount of time used for falling in is a **training** and **leadership** challenge. ***It is not a timed event.*** It is either fast enough or it is not! Handle the problem using **leadership** skills and not by depending on a **permanent** technique. Emphasize the importance of speed during the process and motivate the cadets execute it properly. If the cadets are not executing the command quickly enough, have them **FALL OUT**. Tell them that the process needs to be faster. Then give the **FALL IN** command again. Repeat as necessary. **While doing this, watch the cadets to see if you can identify something that is slowing the process and correct it.** Do not allow them to get away with executing this or any other maneuver incorrectly. Insist that the **Dress Right, DRESS** part of the process be executed properly – not exceptions. ***A mistake not corrected is a mistake that will continue.*** It is about falling in as quickly as possible and **not** about falling in using a counting technique.

The “countdown” technique is an example of something that the cadets’ parents or a third grade teacher might do. *“If you don’t get up and start doing your homework by the time I count to three, you are going to be in BIG trouble!”* It is not appropriate for drill and is potentially disrespectful to CAP cadets. A countdown should never become a **permanent** part of the **FALL IN** procedure. Do not have expectations or make assumptions as to how quickly the flight should **FALL IN** until **after** thorough instruction of the **FALL IN** procedure. Once you are certain that they are capable of executing the maneuver properly, you can begin to impose time expectations. **Do not assume that they know how to perform the procedure correctly!**