

Prepare for Being Tagged (An Elevator Speech for CAP)

Perhaps you have just finished marching in a large parade as part of a squadron honor guard and are standing on a street corner, still in your uniform, waiting for your parents to find you. Maybe you have just finished handing out programs at a Memorial Day event and are debriefing with your sergeant on a sidewalk while waiting for traffic clear. You might even be stopping for a soda in a store while on your way to or from a weekly CAP meeting. In any of these cases, someone might see you and decide that YOU are the person they would like to interrogate about Civil Air Patrol. You are wearing the uniform. Can you answer the questions, or will you be the deer in the headlights?

Everyone should have an “elevator speech” rehearsed and ready to give without even thinking. An “elevator speech” is a short, concise summary of something that could be given during the length of a typical elevator ride. Giving a professional answer reflects well on CAP and CAP’s mission. Preparing and rehearsing your answers will also help you develop your own sense of purpose in the organization.

You don’t have to become a certified Public Affairs Officer or memorize the Wing web site contents for your speech. However, here are some facts that [may](#) be interesting enough to remain in your memory:

Congress mandates CAP to do the following:

- Provide aviation education and training
- Contribute to public welfare
- Assist in local, state, and national emergencies

In short, CAP provides Americans with trained volunteers to support non-combat Air Force programs and missions. How does CAP do provide that support?

- CAP conducts nearly 90% of inland search and rescue authorized by the Air Force.
- CAP flies daily missions to support the Drug Enforcement Administration and the US Forestry service.
- CAP planes are used to simulate “aerial targets” to train US interceptors. (CAP plays the part of the “bad guy” trying to enter the country or smuggle drugs.)
- CAP maintains a survivable radio network to provide emergency communications when disaster strikes.
- CAP maintains 550 aircraft and a vast number of vehicles, rescue equipment, and radios.
- CAP has 33,000 adults and 23,000 cadets in 1,650 units around the globe.
- CAP trains adults and cadets to find missing persons and work with the Emergency Medical Services.
- CAP flies human tissue for organ transplants.
- CAP even fills sandbags during spring floods.

CAP does much more than these examples illustrate. Think about your own experiences, training, and education. Tell your “interviewer” what YOU have done and seen. Let the person know what Civil Air Patrol is doing for citizens. You [may](#) or [may](#) not end up recruiting a new member as a result, but you will have enhanced CAP’s ability to do its job when you have shared its purpose and capabilities with the public.

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