



# NCO's Handbook

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# Introduction

## Congratulations!

Congratulations on your promotion and welcome to the most exclusive club in the Squadron! The first months as an NCO are undoubtedly some of the most difficult and nerve-wracking you will encounter in your time as an NCO. However most problems can be overcome with a little self-confidence and initiative.

You will no-doubt have had a pep talk from the CO and your SNCO's, this booklet is designed to help you through the first months as you get used to the parade night routine. Use this booklet as a reference point; many hours have been spent compiling it, by people with years of experience.

The majority of the parade night routine can be spelt out in black and white for you here; however this booklet does not mean that the more experienced NCO's and uniformed adult staff should not be approached for advice! We cannot list the solution for every possible scenario that you are likely to face on a parade evening, but we have included the most important ones for your attention.

Remember this; you have been promoted because you have shown the squadron commitment and loyalty. You have demonstrated your capability by passing the written test and the drill test. You have shown your superiors the qualities that they are looking for in a junior NCO. You have what it takes. You must now expand your knowledge and training to become a world-class cadet NCO.

You have been selected to undertake a genuine and responsible role within the squadron and the ACO. The squadron has deemed you worthy of the challenge and believe in your ability, so remember to continue enjoying your time in the Air Cadets; responsibility does not mean no fun.

## The role of the NCO



*“It is a fundamental principle of the ATC that Cadet NCOs should use the knowledge, responsibility and experience they have acquired to train and lead other cadets and thereby contribute to the discipline and ethos of the squadron. They should also contribute to the organisation and infrastructure of their unit. This contribution should increase with age, experience and ability. Suitable cadets are to be encouraged to attend NCO training and cadet leadership courses to develop their skills to undertake these functions to ensure effective personal development. Cadet NCOs are role models for younger cadets and, as such, they must be of good character and be able to set and maintain the high standards which the Corps demands.”*



# The transition period

## Making the mental leap

Okay, so you are now an NCO, and that causes problems for you.

What are we talking about? Well let me explain....

When you got promoted, did all your friends get promoted too? Probably not. This causes a problem in the fact that you are now no longer a 'Cadet' but a Cadet NCO. You should try to distance yourself from the 'cadets' (even if your friends are still cadets) and mix with the NCO's as much as possible.

This does not mean you should shun your friends and never talk to them again, but it will be easier for you if you get on with the task of learning to be an effective NCO by hanging round with the NCO's, and not hanging around with the cadets! Does that make sense? I hope so.

It will also make it easier for you if you ever have to discipline one of your friends (it does happen, believe me), and also there are those people in the squadron who probably think that they should have been promoted and not you. Beware of people with grudges, by hanging round the NCO's and using the mess, you are keeping out of their way, and building up your experience at the same time.

This is the transition period; your main task now is to stop being a cadet and start developing into an effective NCO. As with anything, this will take time. You are not expected to *know everything* now that you are an NCO. However, you are expected to learn everything over a period of time, the only way to do this is to mingle with the NCO's and become one of them, not by staying a cadet.

## What is expected of me?

As an NCO, **YOU** set the standard for ALL of your juniors. If you don't set a good example how can you be expected to dress down a cadet for his poor standards, when they will be merely emulating you? Keep yourself one step ahead of the cadets; be smart, courteous, keen, and above all sensible, nothing looks worse than an NCO who acts like a complete idiot.

You need to become less like a cadet, and behave more like a cadet NCO, you will need to ensure that you learn and gradually take on more responsibility as time progresses.

Remember your protocols, just because it is first name terms with the rest of the NCO's in the mess, does not mean you carry that out to the parade square or drill hall.

Suggested reading matter;

ACP 19; Drill and Cerimonial  
ACP 20B ACTI 204; Dress regulations

## What is not expected?

- Don't jump in and try and do everything.
- Learning to walk before you can run is a good starting point.
- Don't mock cadets who did not make the grade like you have.
- Don't think you can lord it over people.
- Don't think that you now "know everything" - because you don't.

## Tips on coping

First rule; Earn respect.

- Treat everyone fairly and impartially at all times.
- Treat others as you would want to be treated yourself.
- Guide the cadets in your charge, do not make demands.
- Listen to your staff and Senior NCO's.

Second rule; Gain confidence.

- Act confident!
- You will make mistakes, as long as you learn from it, no-one who is important is bothered.
- Delegate duties where required, but remember, YOU are responsible for their successful outcome.

Third rule; know your limitations.

- Always ask if unsure!
- Know where to go to find out more information.

# The NCO's mess

## An exclusive club

The history of the 'mess' goes way back to the formation of this country's armed forces, where the mess was the place where a soldier could get fed, and have a drink. This tradition has little changed over the years, and in the RAF, the mess is the eating place, and the centre of the social scene on an airbase. It is also where single Officers and SNCOs live, if they chose to live on-station. For you, the NCO's mess is an exclusive club where you can retire at break and after parade for a chat with your fellow NCO's. It is **YOUR** place, exclusively for NCO's **ONLY**.

**Do not allow cadets to use your mess EVER.**

The mess has rules which you must obey. Some are set by the NCO's themselves; some are set by the CO.

## Mess rules

1. Never wear your beret in the mess. (This is one of the old traditions of the mess)
2. The mess is for NCO's and NCO's **ONLY**. Absolutely no cadets are permitted in the mess, even as guests.
3. You **MUST** ask permission from the senior officer present, before inviting **ANY** guest into the unit, be they boyfriend, girlfriend, civilian, or ex-cadets.
4. Anyone other than an NCO, wishing to enter the mess whilst it is in use, MUST KNOCK and wait to be invited in, or someone to go out to them.
5. At the end of the evening, the mess must be left clean and tidy, failure to do so will mean that the mess will be closed by the CO, and you will have to slum it in the hall with the other cadets. This is the responsibility of ALL NCO's.

# The Officer's Mess

## Do's and don'ts

Classroom 5, the Staff room, the Officers mess, whatever you call it, it has several purposes. Its prime use is that of a room where all adult staff and staff cadets may go to carry out any work they have to do, if they are not teaching. This is to prevent 'floaters' who can unintentionally disrupt other classes. It can also be used as a classroom in an emergency.

As an NCO you will no doubt stay behind at the end of the evening in the mess, and you may have occasion to go to the Officers mess. If you wish to discuss something with a member of staff, you should knock on the door and WAIT until they come out to you, or you are signalled to enter. Senior NCO's may knock and enter immediately. If for some reason you are invited into the mess after the end of the evening, you should remove your beret before you enter.

On other occasions, such as dining in night, you will be in the Officers mess and should remember that you could be rubbing shoulders with some important people, such as the Wing Commander, the Mayor, etc. It does not need to be said that you must be on your best behaviour on these occasions. (The staff are too!)

The traditions of the Squadron Officers mess is more deeply rooted than that of the NCO's so be aware of the protocol that you must follow when you are a guest in the Officers mess.

# The Fire registers

## Purpose

The taking of rolls has 3 purposes:

1. We know how many cadets are present, in case a fire breaks out.
2. We know who is attending and who is not.
3. We know the squadron strength, and the average squadron strength.

The most important purpose is the first one. This is why it is important to correctly mark down who is here and who is not here on an evening. This is why we tell the cadets to report to the duty NCO on arrival if they are late, so they can be marked down on the rolls.

# Fire drill

If there is a fire, we need to check as quickly as possible if there is anyone trapped in the building. As a duty NCO, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure the rolls are accurate, and that the head count is carried out quickly, and accurately.

## Actions in the event of fire alarm sounding

1. Don't panic.
2. Keep calm.
3. Leave the building by the nearest exit.
4. Ensure that personnel do not run.
5. Forget about the hose, someone else will take care of it.
6. Make sure everyone gets to the ERV as quickly as possible. The other NCO's will assist you.
7. Make a physical head count, carefully, and precisely.
8. You should already know the number of cadets in the building.
9. If it does not tally, re-check at least once, and inform the duty officer.
10. Perform a roll call for each flight.
11. When everyone is accounted for, approach the duty officer, and inform him of the number of cadets accounted for.

# The cleaning rota

## Purpose

The building must be kept clean for us to operate as an efficient and smart unit. It is the duty NCO's responsibility to ensure that the building is cleaned *thoroughly* by the cadets at the end of the evening.

**Do NOT use cleaning as a punishment, there are more effective ways. (See later on in the booklet)**

Do not be afraid to make them do it again until it is good. This squadron prides itself on its nice building and we like to keep it spotless. By letting cadets get away with doing a half-hearted job is as good as not making anyone do cleaning in the first place.

Bear in mind, if the cleaning is not good enough, you were the one who checked it! The duty officer will make **YOU** do it yourself - *be warned!*

For a current list of the cleaning requirements, note that there are posters in every room detailing what should be done.

If a room has not been used, then there is no point in assigning someone to clean it.

# Disciplinary procedure

As a new junior NCO it will at times be difficult to discipline some others, especially if you are uncertain of the regulations. It will help you immensely if you take the time to read the text below and are not afraid to ask your fellow NCO's or the adult staff.

Discipline is a fact of life within the ATC, as it is in the RAF, and you will have many disciplinary problems to deal with in your time as an NCO. Some will be easy, others difficult, and we cannot list here the actions to be taken in any given scenario. This is where experience takes over.

Discipline comes easily if you have the respect of the cadets, and you can only earn this over a period of time. Allow yourself to bed in for a few weeks, and don't go throwing your weight around for a few months, you could lose a lot of friends. Treat the cadets with respect and they will do likewise for you, and when it comes to disciplining someone, it will be a lot easier for you.

However, remember that you have been given rank, because it was decided by the powers above that you had the qualities to cope with the pressure of rank, so don't be afraid to discipline someone if you have to.

Use your common-sense, be consistent in your discipline and remain fair. If you make a mistake, your superiors will support you if it was genuine, but remember you will always have to be accountable for your actions.

## How to deal with discipline problems

<b>Advise</b>	Tell them they are not behaving correctly.
<b>Instruct</b>	Tell them how to behave correctly.
<b>Discipline</b>	Take them into a separate room, with a suitable witness (i.e. if Female Cdt, take a female Cdt/NCO) and give them a stern talking to.
<b>Refer</b>	If this doesn't work at all, send it up the chain of command.

You can cycle through the Advise/Instruct/Discipline section as much as you feel necessary, but for repeat offenders you will ultimately need to get a superior involved.

Refer persistent offenders to the SWO or CO.

**YOU MUST NEVER USE DRILL OR PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT  
(i.e.: PRESS UPS, ETC) AS A PUNISHMENT.**

## Discipline hints

1. Avoid confrontations, stare the offender straight between the eyes, and say "I'll speak to you later". You can then back off, but you are not the "loser". You can then speak to a senior NCO, or officer to help deal with the problem.
2. Don't dish out punishments in front of everyone else unless it is needed. This merely makes the offender a martyr to their cause. "I'll speak to you later, and we'll see what the WO has to say about this." is usually effective, but make it clear to everyone around that the offender is going to get it in the neck, and make sure that they do!
3. Don't threaten cadets; make it clear to them that they are going to get a severe ticking off. Discipline in private.
4. If in doubt, a SNCO, or uniformed member of staff will be more than willing to help you with any disciplinary problem you might have. They have many years of experience, the worst thing to do is to attempt to struggle through and make a complete hash of it. You will have "lost" to the offender if you do that.

## Effective punishments for minor disciplinary issues

- Polishing trophies (make sure that they do this in a separate room away from other cadets)
- Weeding at break time (tools are available)
- Sweeping the parade square (Yard broom)
- Sweeping the terrace outside the entrance (Yard broom)
- Picking up stones on the terrace
- Dusting out the light covers (remove gently – wipe out with duster and replace)

These punishments will also help to keep the HQ maintenance level down.

In addition to the above, if you sense a problem, make sure they are standing to attention, and that they address you by your rank.

This will preoccupy them, and give you the upper hand!

# How to give drill orders

All drill commands should be given loudly and clearly. Nothing is worse than an NCO who mumbles orders, or is so quiet or unclear that no-one can hear or understand them.

When giving drill orders to a flight or squad of cadets it is important that you stand to attention and do not move about. Turn and face the flight or squad when giving orders, they will then be able to hear you clearly.

A drill command can be broken down into four sections:

1. The introduction "Flight, from the," Clear level voice
2. *The cautionary* "riiiiiiggght," Extended call - drops away
3. (A pause)
4. **The executive** "**number!**" Sharp loud voice

*Words in italics should be dragged out, dropping away*

**Words in bold should be sharp, loud, and clear.**

Example:

Flight, from the *riiiggghhhhtttt*, (pause) **NUMBER!**

## Orders to form up a flight by numbers

1. Flight, *right* **marker**
  2. Tallest on the right, shortest on the left, in single *rank* **size**
  3. Flight, **number**
  4. Odd numbers, two paces step *forwards* **march**
  5. Number one stand fast, ranks right and *left* **turn**
  6. Form flight, *quick* **march**
  - 7a. Flight, *right* **dress**
- Or
- 7b. Flight, without intervals, *right* **dress**
  8. Eyes **front**
  9. Stand *at ease*

## To get the parade ready for inspection/dismissal

1. Squadron, **shun**
2. Open *order* **march**
- 3a. *Right* **dress**
- Or
- 3b. Without intervals *right* **dress**
4. Eyes **front**
5. *Stand at* **ease**
6. Squadron, **shun**
7. Fall in the senior NCO's
- 8a. Squadron, *right* **dress**
- Or
- 8b. Squadron, without intervals *right* **dress**
9. Eyes **front**
10. *Stand at* **ease**

## Qualities of an NCO

There are many qualities that you can have if you are a good NCO. Ask yourself if you have them. If not, can you develop them with experience?

Can you think of any more?

SMART	DRILL KNOWLEDGE
RESPONSIBLE	LEADERSHIP
COMMON SENSE	CARING
INITIATIVE	MATURE
AWARE	SELF CONTROL
KEEN	INVOLVED
ENTHUSIASTIC	COURTEOUS
PUNCTUAL	CONFIDENT

REMEMBER - You can lose your rank as quickly as you gained it! Keep asking yourself the following questions:

1. Is my uniform neat and tidy, are my shoes bulled up?
2. Am I a good time-keeper?
3. Am I doing the best possible job I can?
4. Am I developing my qualities as a drill instructor?
5. Am I encouraging and motivating my fellow cadets?
6. Am I joining in the NCO team, or standing on the outside looking in?
7. Am I setting the right example to the rest of the cadets?
8. Is my conduct and bearing what it should be?
9. Is my attendance regular, are my subscriptions paid up to date?
10. Do I show a willingness to adapt, improvise, and overcome any obstacles that get in my way?
11. Do I show I have initiative and use it wisely?
12. Do I accept tasks given to me with vigour and interest?
13. How do I progress up to the next rank in the ladder?

## To be a good NCO

You should confidently be able to say that **YOU**:

- ✓ Are RESPONSIBLE
  - ✓ Have COMMON SENSE
  - ✓ Show INITIATIVE
  - ✓ Are AWARE
  - ✓ Are ETHUSIASTIC and KEEN
  - ✓ Are PUNCTUAL
  - ✓ Are SMART and PREPARED
  - ✓ Show LEADERSHIP
  - ✓ Are MATURE
  - ✓ Show COMPASSION
  - ✓ Have SELF CONFIDENCE
  - ✓ Have a GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF DRILL
- And MOST OF ALL....

are **FLEXIBLE** enough to **ADAPT** to situations even when things don't go right.

*If you cannot say that you are all of these things, all of the time then .....*

**IMPROVE YOURSELF**

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