



USAFA Cadet Milestones – Recognition

Who: Fourth Class Cadets

What: The fourth class (freshman) year is traditionally the most difficult at the Academy. In addition to their full academic course loads (20-24 credit hours), heavy demands are placed on fourth class cadets outside of the classroom. Fourth class cadets are expected to learn an extensive amount of military and Academy-related knowledge. They have significant restrictions placed on their movement and actions—traversing the Cadet Area only by approved routes (including staying on the marble “strips” on the Terrazzo) and interacting with upper class cadets using a very specific decorum. Physical training sessions are interspersed before and after classes, along with squadron or wing briefings and team building activities. Near the end of the fourth class year all fourth class cadets will participate in “Recognition,” a physically and mentally demanding 3-day training event which culminates in awarding the Prop and Wings insignia to the fourth class cadets. This signifies that they have satisfactorily completed their fourth class military training and are ready to take on the responsibilities of being a third class cadet. After Recognition, some of the stringent rules of the fourth class year are relaxed.

When: Recognition usually occurs in late Spring (April).

Role of Parents: Recognition is not an event for parents to attend. Not only is it a leadership opportunity for the upper class cadets who plan and execute this event, but it’s a special milestone for fourth class cadets signifying the culmination of their 4-degree year. They become recognized members of the cadet wing with many of the privileges that come with it. Just as during BCT, parents are a source of moral support and encouragement for their fourth class cadets. Check in with your son or daughter before Recognition starts, offer words of encouragement, and root for them on the sidelines. You’ll not be able to



contact them during the 3 days of Recognition, so wait for that phone call on Sunday. You'll be amazed at the personal growth these fourth class cadets will demonstrate by the end of this event. They will be exhausted, but so proud of themselves for making it to this point!

Recognition Boxes: Each basic cadet is assigned a squadron mentor/"coach." This upper class cadet will be contacting you a few weeks before recognition commences to request a package of personal items that newly recognized cadets will be authorized to have in their rooms. If the upper classman coach doesn't contact you by mid-February (early February for parents stationed overseas) please contact the USAFA Parent Liaison at USAFA.ParentLiaison@afacademy.af.edu, and the Parent Liaison will help connect the parents with the appropriate squadron point of contact. Most often these packages will include:

- favorite civilian clothing items (keep in mind space is limited at USAFA, and don't forget to include socks and shoes!)
- XL Twin sheets/towels (recognized cadets no longer have to use AF issued items)
- favorite snacks
- a few personal items

Authorized items are often squadron-specific, so rely on your cadet's squadron coach to offer suggestions on what types of items you should send. Once recognized, your son/daughter will have a better idea of what they will most want in their room. There's plenty of time to find those items down the road. Send only what's recommended by your cadet's squadron mentor.

HINT: *If your cadet has been assigned a sponsor family, mail recognition items directly to them. The sponsor family can deliver items directly to the squadron coaches, eliminating mailroom delays.*

Frequently asked Questions

What if my cadet doesn't get Recognized?

AOCs make the final determination on whether cadets pass Recognition. In fact, AOCs/AMTs will identify those Fourth Class Cadets who are at risk of failing Recognition due to deficiencies PRIOR to Recognition.

Please realize that a lot of 4-degrees are initially told they aren't ready. That doesn't mean they won't be ready in time for Recognition. Remember that mental stress in BCT? Well, consider this a mini-BCT where cadre motivate the fourth class cadets to perform at a higher level with extra stressors designed to bring the best out in each cadet.

Having said that, there are always a handful that don't get Recognized for many reasons -- injury/illness resulting in bedrest, didn't pass AFT/PFT, etc. They get additional training for several weeks and a 2nd Recognition is conducted within the squadron for those that need extra training.

My Doolie is an IC and gone during Recognition. What happens?

Most likely an IC will go through a Recognition that the team conducts for them. Or they don't travel with the team over Recognition and get recognized with the class. Otherwise, they would go through the 2nd Recognition when that happens. The Commandant of Cadets works with the Athletic department to minimize the number of absences from Recognition.

For more information please contact:

USAFA Parent Liaison Contact Information

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