



Fact Sheet: The USAFA Preparatory School Honor Program



Honor Program Intent: Support the overall Prep School mission by providing honor education and character/leadership development opportunities to Cadet Candidates and staff.

The Bottom Line: All Cadet Candidates (C/Cs) live by the USAFA Honor Code while they attend the Prep School. It is the responsibility of each C/C to learn the minimum standards and adhere to them, but the ideal is to LIVE HONORABLY.

Prep School (PL) Honor Code and Oath: “We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does. Furthermore, I resolve to do my duty, and to live honorably, (so help me God).”

- The Prep School Honor Code is identical to that of USAFA.
- When C/Cs take the Honor Oath, the words “so help me God” are optional to respect all faiths or non-faith.

Honor Education for Cadet Candidates

Basic Military Training: Prior to taking the Honor Oath, C/Cs learn about the Honor Code and its elements. In total, BMT Honor training requires approximately 10 hours of interactive classroom time. Honor Lessons are conducted with the help of many PL staff members across all mission elements, who fill 75+ teaching slots.

1. Introduction to the Honor Code: Given by PL Character, Leadership, Culture and Climate (PLC) staff
2. Honor Lesson 1: Lying and the principle of Honesty
3. Honor Lesson 2: Stealing and the principle of Respect
4. Honor Lesson 3: Cheating and the principle of Fairness
5. Honor Lesson 4: Toleration and the principles of Support and Accountability
6. Honor Exam: Evaluates retention of BMT Honor lessons and ensures each C/C is ready to take the Oath.

Academic Year Training: All training is programmed into the PL Commandant’s military training plan. Honor/Character lessons are typically conducted once or twice per month during training time (~1 hour), or on PL Training Days.

1. Recurring Topics. These topics typically surface every year, as C/Cs begin to deal with challenges associated with academics and dorm life (eg. proper academic documentation, National Character and Leadership Symposium).
2. As-Needed Topics. These topics change from year to year, based on the current issues and challenges, or are one-time opportunities. C/C Character Officers help determine topics and needs for the current class.

The Honor System/Process. The system is the means by which C/Cs are held accountable for living by the Honor Code. If an honor violation is suspected, it is addressed using the following process:

1. Informal Clarification - a non-threatening “clarification” conversation between initiator and C/C in question.
2. Formal Clarification - a second conversation with PLC staff and the C/C Group Character Officer.
3. Investigation - an uninvolved staff member seeks facts, gathers statements, and recommends way forward.
4. Group Honor Board - uninvolved staff members and honor officers review the facts/testimony and staff votes.

Sanctions for violations: PLC recommends sanctions, and Commander approves. *On average*, rehabilitation is 6 weeks.

Act and Intent. These two elements must be present for an honor violation to exist. Act is the outer *behavior* (or failure to act); intent is the *mindset* regarding the act. An honor violation is confirmed in one of two ways: 1) The C/C admits; 2) A Group Honor Board reviews evidence and a majority vote determines whether or not the C/C committed a violation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do Cadet Candidates use the same Honor System that USAFA cadets use?

A: Yes and no. The Honor Code and Oath are the same, and the same steps are followed when resolving possible honor issues/violations. However, since the PL program is 10 months and there are no upperclass cadets to carry out the honor system, PL staff members fill that mentorship/leadership role. Honor probation sanctions span about 1/8th of the total experience (average 6 weeks at PL, average 6 months at USAFA). The intent behind these modifications is to strike a balance between making the prep experience similar enough to USAFA that it prepares C/Cs for cadet life, and making the prep experience approachable enough to be achievable. Probation is demanding yet motivation/growth-oriented.



Q: Is the honor process like a regular judicial system?

A: Yes and no. The Honor process is a standard set of steps designed to protect the innocent, and seek the truth. Every attempt is made to ensure each C/C is treated respectfully and fairly. However, the process is not a “legal proceeding” and strict adherence to the process will never become a “loophole.” The honor program is simply a Commander’s tool to ensure all C/Cs are treated in a standard manner, and case-handling follows a consistent process. However, all decisions regarding sanctions, probation requirements, disenrollment, etc, belong to the Commander.

Q: How many students leave the Prep School due to the honor code each year?

A: Each year is different, because each case is different. Disenrollment is always an option available to the Prep School Commander, but honor probation is the sanction most often used. Probation is a good way for C/Cs to demonstrate how they respond to a temporary failure, and C/Cs who complete honor probation often say that they are glad for the experience, because it highlighted a personal flaw they knew they had, and enabled them to improve and strengthen their character and equipped them with knowledge and confidence going forward. An honor violation is not usually the sole cause of a disenrollment, but C/Cs who demonstrate lapses in their honor often struggle in other areas. A C/C who does not meet expectations in any pillar (character/honor, military, academic, athletic) will be counseled and made aware of the options available to them. If a C/C violated the honor code, and chose to resign instead of completing honor probation, that would be considered a voluntary resignation. An involuntary dismissal SOLELY a result of an honor violation is rare, but disenrollment is always an option available to a Commander, if warranted.

Q: How many honor violations have been identified at the Prep School in each of the last 10 years?

A: Numbers vary from year to year, but the average falls somewhere between 10 and 15 violations. Most of these violations are “admits” meaning a C/C admitted to violating the honor code when questioned, rather than a board finding the C/C “in violation” of the Honor Code. C/Cs are always encouraged to take ownership of their mistakes and sanctions may be reduced when a C/C responds in a forthright, remorseful, and responsible manner.

Q: How long is honor probation?

A: Probation length is typically 6 weeks. In extreme cases, probation recommendations may be above or below this guideline, depending on 4 factors:

1. Forthrightness: Was the C/C “up front” about what happened? How quickly did they admit when questioned?
2. Type of Report: Did the C/C come forward on their own? Did they admit, or did a board find them in violation?
3. Egregiousness: How serious was the offense? Was it planned in advance or a split-second error in judgment?
4. Time under the Code: What time of year did it happen? Would the average C/C know better?

Q: What happens to someone on probation?

A: Probation is designed to encourage and enforce change. However, C/Cs who successfully complete honor probation say they are glad for the experience, and feel better prepared to succeed as a cadet. Every C/C on probation is matched with a staff member to serve as their honor mentor. In addition to PLC-required assignments, the mentor determines the activities and weekly assignments to be completed by the C/C during honor probation. This allows probation to meet similar requirements and remain fair for all C/Cs, yet is tailored to the person and the situation. Lost privileges and reduced freedoms are intended to help the C/C “press pause” and provide a space for reflection/change. For the duration of probation, the following general sanctions apply. At the midpoint of probation, the C/C’s performance is evaluated and sanctions may be reduced or increased, if warranted.

- Duration: Six weeks is standard. In extreme cases, the Commander may approve shorter or longer sanctions.
- Restriction: The C/C must stay on Prep School grounds, and may not sign out on any passes unless participating in organized community service events. Travel for sport/team/club competitions and events is also restricted.
- Loss of communication and entertainment media: TV/Movies/livestreaming, personal electronics/gaming, etc.
- Loss of rank/positions: Any leadership positions are relinquished and merit list ropes may not be worn.
- Uniform: Civilian clothing is not authorized; PL uniforms are worn at all times
- Loss of Prep School representation: Intercollegiate athletes are allowed to practice but may not play or travel.