

Section 1



ROTC RANK STRUCTURE

Key Points

- 1 The Purpose of Army Ranks
- 2 The Cadet Ranks
- 3 The Cadet Unit Structure
- 4 The Cadet Chain of Command

As the Continental Army have unfortunately no uniforms, and consequently many inconveniences must arise from not being able always to distinguish the commissioned officer from the non-commissioned, and the noncommissioned from the privates, it is desired that some badges of distinction may be immediately provided. For instance, that the field officers may have red or pink-colored cockades in their hats, the captains yellow or buff and the subalterns green. They are to furnish themselves accordingly. The sergeants may be distinguished by an epaulette or stripe of red cloth sewed upon their right shoulder; the corporals by one of green.

GEN George Washington

Introduction

Your **rank** shows where you fit in the **chain of command**, and the chain of command provides the leadership structure for military **units**.

As a new Cadet, you are responsible for following the directions, guidance, and example of those who outrank you. As you advance through ROTC, you will have the opportunity to lead progressively larger and more complex organizations, from the smallest—the team—through the largest—the ROTC battalion.

Military rank is a critical part of the profession of arms. The Continental Army—the army that won independence from Great Britain—at first had no uniforms or badges of rank. The army was made of farmers, laborers, and shopkeepers who wore their work clothes to drill and battle. Think of the confusion that an army without uniforms and rank might experience.

The Purpose of Army Ranks

Military ranks identify who is in charge, indicate levels of leadership and responsibility, and support fast and effective decision making and problem solving.

The Continental Army drew its rank structure—lieutenant, captain, major, colonel, and general—from the traditions of Great Britain, and today’s structure remains close to that of the Continental Army. Lieutenants and captains are “company grade” officers, majors and colonels are “field grade” officers, and generals are “flag” officers.

The Cadet Ranks

ROTC has six Cadet officer ranks. The ranks themselves come from British tradition, and the insignia resemble British, European, and colonial insignia.

Cadet second lieutenants—the most junior of the officer ranks—wear a single disc or dot. Cadet first lieutenants wear two discs or dots. Cadet captains wear three discs or dots.

The insignia changes at major—the first of the field-grade officers. Cadet majors wear a single diamond (sometimes called a *lozenge*), Cadet lieutenant colonels wear two diamonds, and Cadet colonels wear three diamonds.

ROTC recognizes eight Cadet noncommissioned officer (NCO) ranks. The ranks and the insignia resemble those of the active Army. Cadet corporals—the most junior of the NCO ranks—wear two chevrons (sometimes called *stripes*). Cadet sergeants wear three

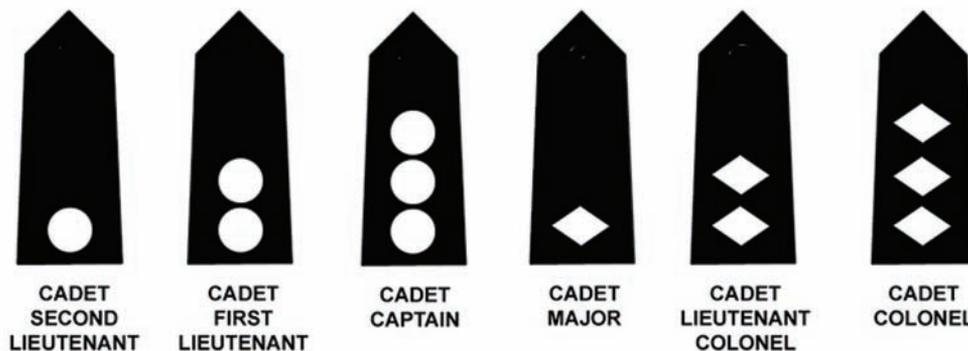


Figure 1.1 Cadet Officer Ranks

Military ranks have existed for thousands of years. Attila’s horde had ranks. The Roman legions had ranks. The rank of **colonel** originated in Roman times: a Roman colonel was in charge of a column—in Latin, **columna**—of soldiers.

The rank of **lieutenant** comes from the French words **lieu** and **tenant**: **Lieu** means “place” (think of “in **lieu** of”). **Tenant** means “holding a position” (think of the landlord/**tenant** relationship). So a lieutenant is someone acting for a superior: someone acting in place of the person holding the position.

rank
official position or grade

chain of command
the system by which authority passes down from the top through a series of military ranks in which each person is accountable to a superior—the top of the chain of command is the president of the United States, the commander in chief

unit
an Army group or organization ranging in size from a field army to a squad

Note that the plural form of sergeant major is **sergeants major**.

Abbreviations for Army Enlisted Ranks

PVT—private
 PFC—private first class
 SPC—specialist
 CPL—corporal
 SGT—sergeant
 SSG—staff sergeant
 SFC—sergeant first class
 MSG—master sergeant
 1SG—first sergeant
 SGM—sergeant major
 CSM—command sergeant major

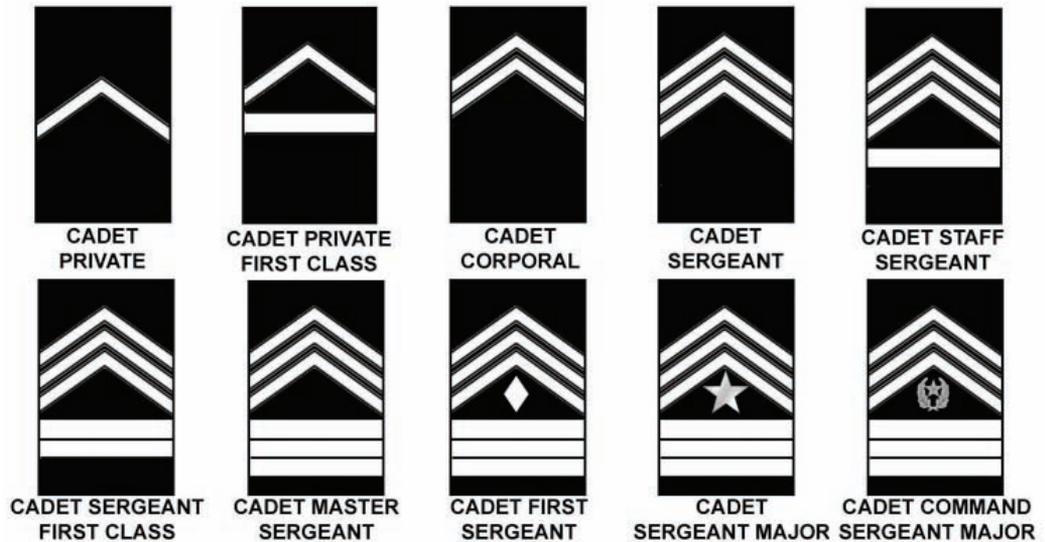


Figure 1.2 Cadet NCO Ranks

chevrons. Cadet staff sergeants wear three chevrons over a bar. Cadet sergeants first class wear three chevrons over two bars, and Cadet master sergeants wear three chevrons over three bars.

Cadet first sergeants wear three chevrons over three bars with a diamond between the chevrons and the bars. Cadet sergeants major wear three chevrons over three bars with a star between the chevrons and the bars. Cadet command sergeants major wear three chevrons over three bars with a star circled by a wreath between the chevrons and the bars.

ROTC recognizes three additional Cadet enlisted ranks, although these are not non-commissioned officer ranks. Basic Cadets wear no insignia. Cadet privates wear one chevron, and Cadet privates first class wear a chevron over a bar.

The Cadet Unit Structure

The Army is made of small units—organizational building blocks—which, when combined, create larger units. Within this organizational structure, leaders command and control the resources necessary to deter conflict and to win when combat is necessary.

Your Cadet battalion and subordinate-unit structure will vary depending upon the size, makeup, and location of your school, but throughout Army Cadet Command, the unit structures will resemble that in Figure 1.3.

Critical Thinking

What would be the effectiveness of an army without ranks? How well would it operate?

Critical Thinking

What advantages and disadvantages are there to the display of rank insignia in a combat zone?

The Cadet Chain of Command

The Cadet chain of command is formed from the MSL IV class at the beginning of each school year. Performance in ROTC, performance at the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC), academics, and overall accomplishments dictate the appointment criteria.

The Cadet chain of command does two things:

1. It helps the professor of military science (the PMS) and other cadre accomplish battalion missions and responsibilities
2. It trains and develops subordinates.

The Cadet chain of command includes four unit levels: battalion, company, platoon, and squad.

The explanation below will include the responsibilities of commanders and staff officers, who help the unit accomplish its missions.

At the Battalion Level—

1. The Cadet Battalion Commander:
 - a. Commands the corps of Cadets, sets the example, and leads the way
 - b. Coordinates with the battalion staff to supervise leadership labs and other events to ensure the training is effective, motivating, and safe
 - c. Conducts meetings and leads battalion formations, such as weekly battalion training meetings to coordinate and confirm all training, logistical, and administrative requirements
 - d. Trains and evaluates other Cadets—officers, NCOs, and enlisted ranks.

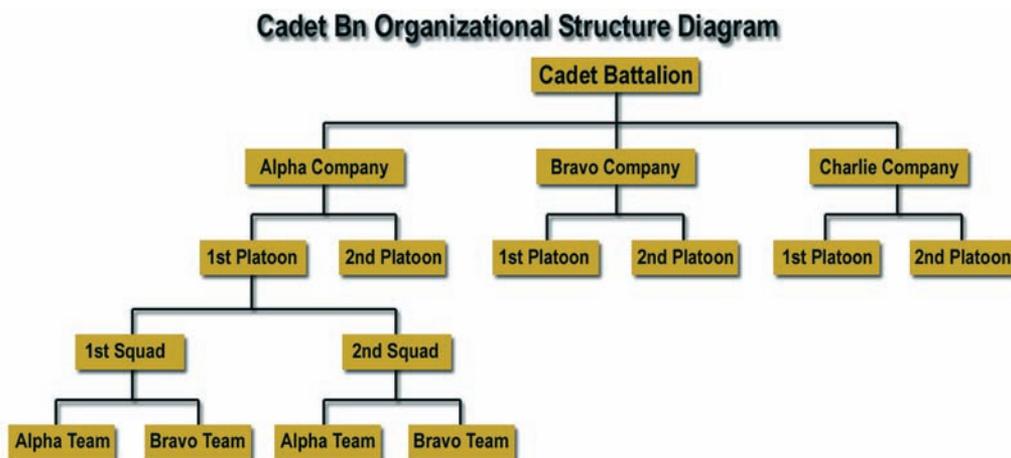


Figure 1.3 Cadet Unit Structure

2. The Cadet Battalion Executive Officer (XO):
 - a. Supervises and coordinates all staff functions
 - b. Commands the battalion in the absence of the battalion commander
 - c. Assists the battalion commander in the performance of his or her duties
 - d. Attends the weekly battalion training meeting
 - e. Provides instruction and evaluation as required.
3. The Cadet Battalion Command Sergeant Major (CSM):
 - a. Advises the Cadet battalion commander
 - b. Maintains Cadet accountability during training
 - c. Checks the Cadet NCOs for job knowledge, military appearance, and knowledge of their subordinates' strengths and weaknesses
 - d. Conducts and supervises training to ensure it meets the Cadet battalion commander's intent
 - e. Attends battalion training meetings.
4. The Cadet Battalion S1 (administrative officer):
 - a. Is responsible for all Cadet administration and accountability
 - b. Ensures Cadet promotions and absences are documented and managed
 - c. Coordinates, publishes, and executes all Cadet social functions and award ceremonies
 - d. Helps the cadre with sponsorship programs
 - e. Provides Cadet status reports at each weekly Cadet training meeting.
5. The Cadet Battalion S3 (operations officer)—
 - a. Is responsible for operations and training in the battalion
 - b. Prepares weekly training meetings and publishes weekly training schedules
 - c. Coordinates all training with the cadre operations officer
 - d. Ensures that all instructors conduct rehearsals and back briefs
 - e. Provides a training status report at each weekly Cadet training meeting
 - f. Coordinates with the cadre operations officer for all required MSL IV Cadet evaluations of MSL III Cadets
 - g. Publishes all operations orders (OPORDs) and memorandums of instruction (MOIs) on projects, training, and Cadet activities.
6. The Assistant Cadet Battalion S3:
 - a. Is the primary assistant to the battalion S3
 - b. Assists with instruction for each lab and coordinates with other staff, lab instructors, and cadre to maintain training standards
 - c. Assists in maintaining all training records, aids, and references.
7. The Cadet Battalion S4 (logistics officer):
 - a. Is responsible for planning and coordinating logistics for projects, training, and activities
 - b. Coordinates with the Cadet operations officer, the cadre operations officer, and the cadre supply technician to ensure all logistics have been coordinated
 - c. Coordinates with the cadre supply technician to ensure 100 percent accountability of battalion property
 - d. Prepares the logistical portion of all OPORDs and MOIs.

8. The Cadet Battalion Public Affairs Officer (PAO):
 - a. Coordinates all PAO activities with the cadre S1, university PAO, and community PAO
 - b. Coordinates advertising campaigns, news releases, and feature articles to increase public awareness of ROTC
 - c. Assists in activities involving the ROTC Advisory Council, the ROTC Alumni, the ROTC Hall of Fame, and others.

At Company, Platoon, and Squad Levels—

1. The Cadet Company Commander:
 - a. Commands the company and is responsible for its day-to-day operations
 - b. Reports directly to the Cadet battalion commander on the morale, welfare, accountability, training, and discipline of the company
 - c. Plans, organizes, and executes company training
 - d. Is responsible for ensuring that the MSL I and II Cadets are prepared for their follow-on years of ROTC.
2. The Cadet Company Executive Officer (XO):
 - a. Commands the company in the absence of the company commander
 - b. Assists the company commander in the performance of his or her duties.
3. The Cadet Company First Sergeant:
 - a. Holds company formations in accordance with Field Manual (FM) 3-21.5 and receives an accurate report from the Cadet platoon sergeants
 - b. Supervises Cadet accountability during training
 - c. Checks Cadet NCOs for job knowledge, military appearance, and knowledge of their subordinates' strengths and weaknesses
 - d. Conducts and supervises training to ensure it meets the Cadet company commander's intent.
4. The Cadet Platoon Leader:
 - a. Is responsible for the platoon's day-to-day operations
 - b. Is responsible to the Cadet company commander on all matters concerning the morale, welfare, accountability, training, and discipline of the platoon
 - c. Plans, organizes, and executes platoon training.
5. The Cadet Platoon Sergeant:
 - a. Assists the platoon leader and supervises and coordinates with the squad leaders
 - b. Holds platoon formations in accordance with FM 3-21.5 and maintains accountability for personnel at all times during military functions
 - c. Conducts and supervises training
 - d. Works with the Cadet first sergeant on the issue, receipt, and accountability of all equipment and supplies for the platoon
 - e. Acts on the platoon leader's behalf during the platoon leader's absence.
6. The Cadet Squad Leader:
 - a. Holds squad formations in accordance with FM 3-21.5
 - b. Checks uniforms and equipment
 - c. Knows each squad member's strengths and weaknesses
 - d. Conducts and supervises training.

Abbreviations for Army Officer Ranks

GEN—general
 LTG—lieutenant general
 MG—major general
 BG—brigadier general
 COL—colonel
 LTC—lieutenant colonel
 MAJ—major
 CPT—captain
 1LT—first lieutenant
 2LT—second lieutenant



CONCLUSION

Effective organization requires both leaders and followers. In the Army, fast and effective decision making requires leadership and teamwork. In combat, there can be no hesitation about who is leading and who is following. Rank takes away the guesswork about who is in charge of what, so leaders and followers can do their jobs.

Learning Assessment

1. What purpose does the division of the Army into officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted ranks serve?
2. List the following in order of size: a squad, a company, and a platoon.
3. What is the Cadet battalion chain of command?
4. List the Cadet ranks.

Key Words

rank

chain of command

unit

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