

2026

FIRST TIMERS GUIDE TO ENCAMPMENT



CIVIL AIR PATROL
WISCONSIN WING

What to Expect...

Daily Life and Activities

- Expect to be very busy with early mornings and lots of physical activity.
- You will have 8 hours each night to sleep.
- Expect Challenging activities like Team Leadership Problems, team sports, ropes courses, and rappelling.
- Participation is encouraged, but no cadet is forced to negotiate a specific challenge.
- Reasonable accommodations will be made for special needs or physical limitations.

Arrive Prepared

- **Physical Conditioning:** Get into better physical condition before you arrive. Work on the same types of activities you do on PT night at your squadron.
- **Hydration:** Start drinking water and avoiding sugary drinks one month prior to the start of encampment.
- **Uniforms:** Most of the time you will wear ABU/OCP uniform and boots. Ensure your hair, grooming, earrings (girls) and insignia are in regulation.
- Have a more experienced member of your squadron inspect your uniform.



Cadets will each receive personal handbooks to study.

Supervision and Support

At Encampment students are broken into groups called “flights.” Each flight has up to 16 cadets, led by two experienced Cadet Cadre members and one adult Training Officer (TO).

Encampment has over 60 adult staff members, including trained medical personnel.

- Lodging: at Fort McCoy, cadets will sleep in single sex, open bay barracks consisting of a twin bed (not bunk beds) with other members of their flight.
- The beds are separated on both sides by storage lockers which create a semi-private space.
- Cadets are free to approach any staff member with any issue at any time.
- Food: Catered meals will be served in the Fort McCoy Dining Facility near our housing.
- Cadets will receive healthy, varied meals each day.
- Accommodations are available for allergies and religious dietary requirements.



For Parents & Guardians

Homesickness

- **Adjustment Period:** It is natural for first-timers to experience homesickness.
- **Stay Three Days:** Experience shows that if cadets give the encampment a chance for at least three days, most will end up enjoying themselves and will graduate.
- **Staff Support:** Cadets can turn to Chaplains, Cadre, Training Officers, and adult executive staff for support.
- **Going Home:** The decision for a cadet to return home will be made only after consultation with the cadet, parents/guardians, and adult staff. Parents are responsible for picking up their cadet.



How to Help

- **Encourage Activity:** Help your cadet prepare by getting in shape prior to encampment.
- **Send Healthy Cadets:** Do not send a cadet who has been recently ill or exposed to an infectious disease. If a cadet cannot participate in at least 80% of the encampment, they may be sent home. Bring inhalers or allergy medications, even if not recently needed.
- **Break In Boots & Shoes:** This is the most important preparation. Ensure boots & shoes fit well and are broken in before arrival.
- **Label Everything:** Label all items with their name, as everyone will have similar gear.
- **Follow the Packing List:** Ensure they bring everything on the mandatory list and do not bring anything that is not listed. Unauthorized or illegal items will be confiscated or may result in dismissal.

Safety & Medical

- **Boots and Shoes:** Make sure your boots and shoes are broken in before encampment. Blisters are the most frequent medical issue.
- **Hydration:** June weather can be warm. Hydrate often! Dehydration is the second most common medical issue.
- **Medications:** Both prescription and over-the-counter medications must be turned in at In-Processing. Cadets are responsible for going to the health services station to take their medications when needed.

Boots: Gear for Success

- **Poorly fitting boots** are the cause of more sick-call visits (blisters, toenail problems) than any other reason.
- **When to Shop:** Try on new boots in the evening, as feet swell during the day.
- **Sizing:** Buy by fit, not by size, as sizing varies between manufacturers.
- **Length Check:** Remove the boot insert and stand on it.
- **Ensure a thumbnail's width of space** between your big toe and the end of the footbed to prevent toes from banging into the tip.
- **Fit:** You should have a fairly snug fit in the ankle, heel, and arch area, but extra room at the front for swelling.
- **Heel Slippage:** Avoid slippage, which causes blisters. A slight lift in new boots should subside after break-in. If heel lift is more than a quarter of an inch, try tightening laces or using an adhesive heel-narrowing patch.
- **Break-in Period:** New boots should feel comfortable when new. The break-in period makes them more comfortable by loosening the leather, but it will not turn a tight or uncomfortable boot into a well-fitting one. Break them in completely before encampment.
- **Buy new socks.** The best choice is wool socks for blister protection. Your second best choice is a wicking synthetic. Avoid cotton socks which hold moisture and cause blisters.



Welcome to Encampment

"From the start of encampment, everyone is a little nervous, but each day, every individual of the flight gets closer together as they learn, problem-solve, eat, and live as a team. What started as a challenging environment turns into a place you never want to leave."

Cadet Major Irwin, Eau Claire Composite Squadron
Encampment 2026 Cadet Deputy Commander of Support



Cadets, we are looking forward to seeing you at Encampment!

Tip: Come ready to learn and push yourself outside your comfort zone - that's where the biggest growth happens.

Contacts for Parents and Guardians:

- When possible, contact your Squadron leadership first.
- Encampment Commander: Lt Col Risler
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- Basic School Commandant: Lt Col Cunningham
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- Deputy Commander for Support: Major Walukas
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