Quick Write

Jot down three customs in your everyday life—based on friendships, family, sports, or community activities—that you think are important. Why are they important?

Customs and Courtesies

One of the most important things you will learn in life is taught in this first chapter. It is a series of traditional military customs and courtesies. You will learn to use these as you talk and act among the people inside your Junior ROTC unit. These customs and courtesies will also help you build confidence in yourself as you deal with all kinds of people as you grow toward adulthood.

What is a custom? A courtesy? Why are they different? Why are they important independently?

The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines **custom** as "a traditional practice or usual way of doing something followed by a social group or people; a habitual practice of a person; or, the tradition or body of such practices."

Although we often use the term, we rarely think about how customs affect our lives.

Consider clothing. By custom, you can wear certain types of clothing for some occasions but not for others. Shorts or jeans might be just right for a backyard cookout, but considered unsuitable for a formal dinner. Custom dictates some functions require you to be dressed more formally than others. People who mock an established custom—by wearing shorts to a formal dinner, for example—show an indifference to or lack of consideration for the standards and feelings of other members of a group or society.

Every group involved in a common undertaking observes customs. Customs vary from family to family, region to region, and country to country. For example, families celebrate major holidays differently. How do you greet other people?
Many people in Asian countries bow, rather than shake hands, when they meet someone. Religious customs also differ widely around the world. Even in your town or neighborhood, you will find different practices in worship.

Even professions have customs. Doctors and lawyers, for example, have a custom to respect the privacy of their patients or clients. If doctors gossip about their patients, they will lose them. If a lawyer violates the privacy of a client, the lawyer’s reputation and practice will suffer. In addition, professionals who betray their patients’ or clients’ confidentiality may be sued or discredited.

Customs, then, are like unwritten laws. People obey customs because they help us get along with others. People cannot create their own customs and expect others to follow them. As a member of a JROTC program, you will inherit many customs. Some customs began with the Army or the Navy; others started when the Air Force became a separate military branch. All of these customs serve as keys to proper behavior in both military and civilian life. Paying attention to these customs will help you adjust to your JROTC unit. The carryover into civilian life will be almost automatic, and will greatly benefit you in your future career path and social life.

Let’s now discuss courtesy. In general, the act of courtesy is an individual act of polite behavior or gesture; a willingness or generosity to provide what is needed (to a person or group). In the military, a courtesy is an expression of consideration or respect for others. Military customs and courtesies go beyond basic politeness. They help build morale and discipline. Morale is a mental and emotional state of enthusiasm, confidence, and loyalty in team members and followers.

Customs and courtesies also contribute to an esprit de corps. This is a common spirit of enthusiasm and devotion to a cause among the members of a group. Military customs teach us about how to pay allegiance, or loyalty or obligation to a person, nation, leader, or cause. Customs and courtesies also remind us of the sacrifice required by all who have served or currently serve in the military.
Military customs and courtesies can also help with mission success. They ensure a consistent respect for the chain of command. They build a base for self-discipline that is needed in times of crisis.

The customs and courtesies surrounding traditional ceremonies allow us to honor properly those who have served well and faithfully. The custom of mass formation helps develop units that act together in their efforts to execute movements, render honors, preserve tradition, and stimulate esprit de corps.

**Historic Customs and Courtesies**

Many customs and courtesies have a long history as part of people's behavior.

**Position of Honor**

We learn, as part of military courtesy, to walk or sit to the left of individuals of higher rank or position. This custom began centuries ago when men still fought with swords. Because most men were right handed, the heaviest fighting occurred on the right. The shield was carried on the left arm, and the left side became defensive. Men and units were proud of their fighting ability; they considered the right of a battle line to be a post of honor. When an officer walks on your right, he or she is symbolically filling the position of honor.

**Hand Salute**

The hand salute is another example of a military custom that began long ago. In fact, it is so old that its origin is uncertain. Some say it began in later Roman times (1 A.D. to 500 A.D.). Others trace the beginnings of the hand salute to the Middle Ages. Knights wore suits of armor, which included a helmet and a visor. When two knights on horseback met, they would raise their visors to expose their faces. If the knights recognized one another as allies, they would raise their visors to expose their faces. If the knights recognized one another as allies, they would raise their visors to expose their faces. If the knights recognized one another as allies, they would raise their visors to expose their faces. If the knights recognized one another as allies, they would raise their visors to expose their faces. If the knights recognized one another as allies, they would raise their visors to expose their faces. This was always done with the right hand, since the left hand held the horse's reins.
The salute changed when European free men who served as soldiers began carrying their own weapons. When these soldiers met, they would raise their right hands to show that they held no weapons and that the meeting was friendly. This practice gradually became a way of showing respect. In early American history, the custom sometimes involved removing the hat. By 1820, this was modified to touching the hat. You may have even seen this practice repeated often in old western movies. Cowboys, for example, greeted each other in this way. They would tip their hats to those in authority, like a local sheriff, or to prominent men and women of wealth or position in society. Since then, the hand salute has become the one used today.

Though it varies in form across the globe, the hand salute says, “I greet you.” It is also customary to greet another member of the military with words when you meet face-to-face. When you salute an officer, say “Good morning (afternoon or evening) sir/ma’am,” depending on the time of day. By returning the salute you say, “I return your greeting.”

The salute signals that you recognize and respect your comrades in the honorable profession of arms. A sloppy salute, on the other hand, shows a lack of confidence or respect. People may think that you do not understand the meaning of the salute or that you are not proud of the unit.

Service members from different branches in salute.

Courtesy of Senior Airman Kayla Newman/Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System

You should salute your fellow cadets and officers with pride in a friendly, cheerful, and willing manner.

In addition, when you honor the Colors you show respect for your country with a firm, confident hand salute.

How you salute tells a lot about your attitude as a cadet. If you salute proudly and smartly, it shows your personal pride and your pride in the unit. It shows that you have confidence in your abilities as a cadet.
How to Salute

To execute the hand salute (see previous photo), raise your right hand smartly so the tip of your forefinger touches the lower part of your headgear just to the right of your right eye. When you are not wearing headgear, your forefinger should just touch your right eyebrow. If you are wearing glasses, touch the tip of the right forefinger to that point on the glasses where the frame meets the right edge of the eyebrow. Your arm, shoulder to elbow, should be parallel to the ground at a natural angle (about 115 degrees forward) from your body. Your thumb and fingers should be extended and joined with a straight line between the tip of your middle finger and your elbow. Your posture should be erect and alert; head and eyes should be turned toward the person you are saluting, unless you are in formation. Be careful not to tilt your head toward your hand; bring your hand all the way up. Drop the salute smartly. Move your hand smoothly to your side in one motion without slapping your side. Never have anything in your mouth or your right hand when saluting.

You must be in one of the following positions before rendering the salute: standing at attention or marching at attention. A junior member should begin the salute in time for a higher-ranking officer to return it before passing the junior member. Remember, when you are returning a salute, turn your head and eyes toward the officer and salute.

Whom to Salute

Salute the President of the United States, all commissioned and warrant officers of the United States Armed Forces, and officers of friendly foreign nations. You should also salute the Secretary of Defense, the secretaries of the US military service branches, and any Medal of Honor recipient.

When to Salute

Members of the Armed Forces, which are a nation’s military forces, exchange salutes in many situations when in uniform. The person who is saluted always returns the salute, unless he or she is unable to do so because of physical incapacity or when the right hand cannot be freed, as in carrying packages. A superior whose hands are full with packages, etc., need not return the salute. However, the junior member must salute and the senior member should nod in return or verbally acknowledge the salute. An exchange of verbal greetings is also appropriate if the junior member is carrying articles in both hands.

By tradition, if you are of junior rank, you salute first (the only exception to this occurs when a unit commander gives an official report to an adjutant who might be junior). If you are of junior rank, and see and recognize a military officer dressed in civilian clothes, you should salute the officer. Always return salutes by those of lower rank.

The basic rule is that, upon recognition, the military hand salute is rendered to all officers outdoors, with some exceptions. Below, you’ll see some of these.
The military hand salute is not rendered indoors, except when performing a formal report to, or receiving a formal award from, an officer. This will be covered later in Lesson 6. Salutes are also exchanged at the conclusion of a conversation.

There often seems to be some misunderstanding about exactly when to salute. The following information should answer some common questions about when to salute.

**Outdoors**

Outdoor salutes are exchanged upon recognition of officers and warrant officers of the Armed Forces by JROTC cadets and enlisted personnel. The term *outdoors* means being outside a building, including areas such as open porches, covered sidewalks, bus stops, covered or open entryways, and reviewing stands. Salutes will be exchanged outdoors any time officers and warrant officers and JROTC cadets or enlisted members of the Armed Forces cross paths. The salute will be exchanged with a person on the sidewalk or with a person approaching or in the same structure. This applies both on and off military installations. Even when two out-of-uniform members of the military are outdoors and recognize one another, they usually exchange salutes (if the exchange of salutes is otherwise inappropriate). The salute is also rendered anytime you are outside and the National Anthem is playing. The salute is made from the position of attention, facing the Colors, or if not visible, facing the direction from which you hear the music.

**Exceptions**

Here are some special circumstances when salutes are not customarily exchanged:

**Marked Government Vehicles/Staff Cars.** Military pedestrians (including gate sentries) and officers in moving military vehicles do not have to exchange salutes. However, when the passengers in a vehicle are easily seen to be officers (for example, officers in appropriately marked vehicles), they must be saluted.

**Standing in a Group.** If you are part of a small group that is not in formation, the first person to see the officer calls the group to attention, and everyone should face the officer and salute. If an officer addresses the group or an individual in the group, everyone should remain at attention until the end of the conversation, unless otherwise ordered. At the end of the conversation, everyone should salute the officer.

**In Formation.** If you are in formation and an officer approaches, the person in charge of the group calls the members to attention and salutes for the group.

**Work Details.** If you are in charge of a work detail, salute for the entire group when you meet an officer.

**Civilian Clothes.** Saluting a person wearing civilian clothes is not required, but is recommended if you recognize the officer.
Proper Methods to Demonstrate Recognition and Respect

Even though you may not be able to distinguish the specific rank, you can recognize an officer by the:

- Service hat visor or band
- Hat or beret insignia
- Flight cap and insignia

In addition, marked government vehicles and staff cars may indicate that an officer is aboard.

Common acts of courtesy among all military personnel help maintain discipline and promote the smooth conduct of military affairs. When courtesy is not maintained within a unit, discipline also suffers and the success of the mission can be put in danger. Although many military courtesies involve the salute, other courtesies are also important.

Reporting to an Officer or Board

You are required to report to an officer anytime you have officially asked for and received permission to speak to the officer. You must also report if you have been notified that an officer wishes to speak to you. You must also use proper reporting procedures when reporting to any board, such as promotion or discipline. A board is a group of persons having managerial, supervisory, and/or advisory powers. The manner in which you report to an officer will create a good or bad impression. Remember that your advancement within JROTC depends partly on the impression you make on your instructors or board members. You will make a good impression if you report to an officer properly and demonstrate good military bearing. The reporting procedure is broken down into three separate steps: entrance, reporting, and departure.

Entrance

Before entering the room or office, make sure your cell phone ringtone is set to silent or turned off. Knock once firmly and loudly enough to be heard in an average-sized room. If you don’t get an answer in a reasonable amount of time, knock again. When told to enter, march in at the position of attention. Take the most direct route to the officer or board. Halt approximately two paces from the officer or from the desk if the officer is seated, or board members. Always halt in a way that places you squarely facing the officer or board.
Reporting Process

Reporting is the most critical step. Report in a military manner with snap and precision, but do not exaggerate the movements. The first thing to do is to salute properly. Begin your reporting statement at the time your hand reaches the saluting position. Speak in a clear, conversational tone of voice. If you were told to report, say “Sir/Ma’am, Cadet (your last name) reports as ordered.” If you are reporting on your own, say “Sir/Ma’am, Cadet (your last name) reports.” Hold the salute until you have completed the reporting statement and the officer, or highest-ranking board member has returned your salute. Stand at attention unless ordered otherwise. When the conversation is finished—or the officer or board has dismissed you—come to attention and properly salute. Hold the salute until the officer or highest-ranking board member returns it, and then drop the salute.

Departure

As soon as you drop the salute, complete the appropriate facing movement (about face, left face, right face, or a face in marching) and march or walk at the position of attention. Take the most direct route on the way out. Maintain proper military bearing at all times.
Personal Courtesies

When you are involved with officers—whether they are JROTC cadet officers or commissioned officers in any branch of the military—always take care to observe personal courtesies. These courtesies are usually simple acts of politeness anyone would follow. Only a few courtesies are unique to the military. As mentioned earlier, walk, ride, or sit to the left of a higher-ranking person. This means always give one who is higher-ranking, whether an officer or enlisted person, the place of honor. If you are seated when an officer speaks to you, stand. If you are in a parked vehicle, always get out before speaking to or replying to higher-ranking personnel not in the vehicle.

When military personnel enter an automobile, the highest-ranking member enters last. Junior-ranking members enter a vehicle first and take the seat that will be to the left of the highest-ranking member. Since the higher-ranking person gets in last, he or she will be the first one out. This allows the ranking officer or enlisted member to be the first one greeted by any waiting parties.

Just as with our military forces, JROTC cadets should not forget the proper lines of authority. Situations requiring close and frequent contact between instructors and cadets could create an air of informality. In such instances, cadets must remember to display proper respect to instructors, so the relationship stays the same between instructor and cadet. Instructor staff should practice common courtesy and good human relations with JROTC cadets. Instructors realize that cadets are valuable members of a JROTC unit, and must be treated as such. Instructors should also provide cadets with the proper amount of status, authority, and practical support to carry out their responsibilities.

The letters RHIP stand for “rank has its privileges.” Why does higher rank come with additional privilege? This is because privilege and responsibility go hand-in-hand. The two are inseparable in the military, just as they are in civilian life. A person who assumes more responsibility should enjoy a few special privileges and courtesies. The President of the United States, as Commander-in-Chief, for example, enjoys privileges such as living in the White House. He also has government transportation and personal protection, paid for by our federal taxes.

Depending upon their rank and position, members of the Armed Forces also enjoy certain privileges. For example, most NCOs are exempt from manual labor while supervising work details. Senior ranking officials often receive reserved parking spaces. However, it’s important to remember this precaution about RHIP. Positions must never be abused. NCOs who use junior-ranking service members to run personal errands are misusing their positions and their privileges.

Cadets need to remember that the mission of JROTC, along with the unit’s morale, must come first. Whenever you are awarding or receiving privileges ask: How will this affect the mission and the unit? Problems may arise if members of the unit feel that
a privilege has been undeservedly or unfairly given another. As a result, morale might decline, and disciplinary problems could arise that affect the mission. The privileges of rank and position are indeed worth working for and attaining. However, the best privileges are those you earn, not those you take and have not earned.

**Use of Military Titles**

Using correct titles is another important act of military courtesy. It shows respect for the individual’s rank. You might wonder why the Armed Forces place so much emphasis on titles, but consider for a moment what a title is. It is *a formal name given to a person because of office, grade/rank, hereditary privilege, or as a mark of respect*. Individuals hold a title that matches a particular grade/rank. As members move from one grade/rank to the next, they also earn a title associated with each grade/rank. You will find that military personnel are proud of their titles because they signify hard work and success. When you address personnel by their titles, you are showing proper courtesy and respect to them as individuals as well as to their grade/rank. In addition, you are demonstrating your professionalism and discipline as a military member.

Even though the various services encourage the use of official military titles, higher-ranking members may address those under them by their first names. However, as you saw just above under Personal Courtesies, junior-ranking members must not communicate with higher-ranking individuals so informally. However, there are correct uses of military titles depending on whether communication is informal or formal.
If you are using written communication, you will use the individual’s full title in the address line and salutation of formal, official correspondence: for example, The President, The Honorable (Governor, United States Senate, House of Representatives), Lieutenant Colonel, First Lieutenant, Chief Master Sergeant, or Technical Sergeant, etc.

When you speak to officers or NCOs, use their formal or abbreviated military titles, such as Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel; Second Lieutenant or Lieutenant; Chief Master Sergeant or Chief; Staff Sergeant or Sergeant. You may also use Sir or Ma’am, depending on the gender.

Address civilians as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. Address medical doctors and dentists, as well as veterinarians, as Doctor. A chaplain is officially designated Chaplain, regardless of rank or military service. A chaplain may also be called Father, Reverend, Rabbi, or by another title appropriate to the faith represented. Address other JROTC cadets as Mister/Miss, Cadet, or by their rank followed by the last name.

Retirees are a key part of the military. Treat them with the same respect and courtesies you show active duty members. By public law, they have earned and are entitled to enjoy certain benefits, rights, and privileges from the US government. One of these rights is that they are entitled to be addressed, both in written and verbal communication, by their retired rank.

**Additional Courtesies**

**Calling a Room to Attention**

When an officer or dignitary enters a room, stand at attention. If you are on a cell phone or other electronic device, hang up, put the device down, and wait until told to take a seat. If more than one person is present, the first person to see the officer or dignitary calls the group to attention. However, if an officer of equal or higher rank is already in the room, do not call the room to attention. Call the room to attention again as the officer or dignitary departs. If you are by yourself, do not call the room to attention; however, you must stand at attention until the officer or dignitary has departed.

**Don’t Keep People Waiting**

One of the most valuable habits you can develop is to always be on time. Nothing is more irritating than being asked to be somewhere at a specific time and then having to wait because you or the other person is late. At times, you may not be able to avoid being late. If this happens, call ahead to inform those who are waiting for you that you are going to be late or to reschedule the appointment.
Dining-In and Dining-Out as Lessons in Courtesy

As a junior ROTC cadet, you will become familiar with the custom of dining-in and dining-out, which refer to formal military dinners. These are part of the traditional customs and courtesies you learn as a cadet. You will learn more about the etiquette of dining-in and dining-out as part of JROTC rules of etiquette later in Lesson 6.

Taboos

Avoiding taboos goes hand-in-hand with observing customs and courtesies. A taboo is a prohibition excluding something from use, approach, or mention. Taboos may be the result of long-held traditions or the requirements of good taste. You should not scoff at taboos, even when they strike you as being absurd. You may inadvertently offend someone or some group. Below are some taboos that are frowned upon in the military.

Showing Disrespect to the Uniform

Bad conduct in uniform is a longstanding taboo. Aside from the disrespect a person reaps as a result of bad conduct, it is a disgrace to the uniform and the branch of service represented. The good impression created by a large number of cadets who have dressed and behaved properly in public can be destroyed by just one cadet who presents a poor appearance or acts inappropriately.

Military members can be court-martialed for disgracing the uniform through bad conduct or by violating the regulations that govern wearing of the uniform. A court-martial is a military or naval court of officers and, occasionally, enlisted personnel appointed by a commander to try offenders under military law. Part of the Air Force mission is to keep citizens of the United States interested in airpower. As a result, anything that detracts from a favorable impression also detracts from the success of the Air Force mission.

Electronic Devices

Nothing shows greater disrespect to another person than to continue talking on your cell phone, or to use an electronic device while the other person is trying to have a conversation with you. This indicates to the other person that you are not interested in what they have to say. If you are using your electronic device while an officer or NCO is talking to you, this shows disrespect for authority and higher-ranking service members. This may detract from the favorable impression that higher-ranking members have previously held for you, and may affect your advancement in the unit.
Gossip
Gossip, because it often causes quarrels and disputes, is considered taboo. A unit’s morale may be damaged by feuds that arise from gossip. With the growth of social media and blogs on the Internet, it is very easy to be tempted to believe everything you read. However, the Internet is not a center of integrity. More often than not, it serves as a huge rumor mill that can get you caught up in telling and passing half-truths or outright untruths about others, is considered a form of bullying and may be against the law. Indulging in this behavior can be very harmful to you and those you speak about.

Vulgar Conduct and Language
Vulgar conduct and language are taboo behaviors. Neither JROTC cadets nor instructors should lose their temper to the point of using profanity, particularly in addressing junior-ranking members of the unit. Instructors and cadets who use abusive and profane language to make a point show lack of self-control—not to mention a limited vocabulary. Cadets may risk receiving a reprimand if their conduct is poor, affecting their chance of advancement or the ability to hold their current position. Worse, any use of profane or abusive language by any members of the unit undermines their effectiveness as leaders.

Military Time
The most commonly used form of telling time in the world today is to use the 24-hour clock. In the United States, this is referred to as military time, which operates off the 24-hour clock, beginning at midnight. The first country to use the 24-hour clock was Italy in the 1800s, with the US Navy adopting the 24-hour clock in 1920 and the rest of the US Military by World War II.

Suppose you are told to be somewhere by 0600 (“oh-six-hundred”). It means that your arrival should be at 6:00 a.m., civilian time. All of the military services use military time, commonly known as the 24-hour clock. It is used in every facet of military life.

When you state time to a fellow cadet or instructor, you should pronounce time in one of four possible ways. If the time is 12:15 a.m., or 15 minutes past midnight, you would say “zero-zero-fifteen” or “zero-zero-fifteen hours.” You may also say “oh-oh-fifteen,” or “oh-oh-fifteen hours.” Many military people use the term “zero” (such as “zero-three-fifteen”) when the time is not exactly on the hour, or exactly on the half-hour. They will use “oh” for such times as “oh-eight-hundred” (8:00 a.m.) or “oh-nine-thirty” (9:30 a.m.).

Table 1.3 shows a basic conversion chart for civilian to military time.
Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)

When it comes to operational matters (such as communications, training exercises, deployments, ship movements, aircraft flights, etc.), the military often coordinates with bases and personnel located in other time zones. To avoid confusion, the military uses time called **Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)**, *established to aid worldwide navigation and is based on the zero degree north/south line running through Greenwich, England*. At this time, there are currently 24 time zones around the world, with 12 time zones east of Greenwich and 12 west of Greenwich. The US Military refers to GMT as *Zulu Time*, and they attach the “Zulu” (Z) suffix, to ensure the time zone referred to is clear.

For example, two commanders may need to talk about an upcoming joint-base exercise. Although one commander is located in Germany and the other commander in California, they agree the commander in Germany will call at 1800 Z. By adjusting their respective local times to Zulu Time, the commander in California will know...
what time to expect the phone call. The commander in California would add 8 hours to his or her local time and the commander in Germany would subtract 2 hours from his or her local time. Therefore, the commander in California can expect a call at 1000 local and the commander in Germany will place the call at 2000 local.

More time zone locations and conversion charts can be found on the Internet on various sites including http://www.greenwichmeantime.com.
CHECKPOINTS

Lesson 3 Review

Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. Why do people tend to obey customs?
2. In the military what does courtesy express?
3. Why do customs and courtesies help with mission success?
4. In early Europe, soldiers would raise their right hands to show what?
5. If you are wearing glasses, what should the right forefinger touch when saluting?
6. If you are outside, in uniform, what should do when you hear the National Anthem playing?
7. When reporting to a military officer or board what is the first thing you should before entering the room?
8. What should a cadet do when a military officer or dignitary enters a room?
9. What do cadets who use abusive and profane language show?
10. If you are told to report at 0730, what time is that using standard time?
11. Write the following times in military time: 12:15 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.; 3:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

APPLYING YOUR LEARNING

12. Describe three ways you can demonstrate rank, recognition, and respect within your JROTC unit.