

# THE ENLISTED FORCE STRUCTURE



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

**4 SEPTEMBER 2025**

## CMSAF PERSPECTIVE

Fellow Wingmen,

Wearing the uniform of the United States Air Force is to take on a calling far greater than a job; it reflects a deep commitment to our nation, our shared purpose, and the Airmen who have come before us. The strength of our enlisted corps is rooted in tradition, legacy, honor and an unwavering dedication to integrity, service and excellence.

Our core values serve to guide us on our path in this profession, they are the cornerstone of the American people's faith in us. This enlisted force structure implements our core values; establishing the foundational expectations and responsibilities of all enlisted Airmen.

Each of us is obligated to understand, accept and execute these requirements. We only have one chance to be an Airman, and we must do it right. In doing so, we pay tribute to the heroes in our service's rich history, we honor their legacy, and we stand ready to deliver decisive, war-winning airpower, anytime, anywhere!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David A. Flosi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**David A. Flosi**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force**

## PURPOSE

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The strength of the United States Air Force lies within the character and commitment of its enlisted personnel. This instruction defines how we organize and construct our enlisted ranks, as well as the expectations, responsibilities, and guiding principles which will shape each Airman's career path. It supplies the framework to construct a skilled, disciplined, and combat-ready force able to achieve mission success in any environment.

Airmen exhibit dedication, competency, and unyielding accountability, united for a shared cause to safeguard our nation. Regardless of specialty or mission, we are a unified team devoted to upholding the highest standards of military professionalism. Through purposeful development of leadership at every level, we ensure Airmen have the capability to bear greater responsibilities with sound judgment and moral courage.

Growth is driven by education, operational experience, and continuous self-improvement, strengthened by foundational competencies, specialty-specific knowledge, and Airman Leadership Qualities. Together, these components create a shared framework enabling enlisted Airmen to lead decisively, maintain discipline, and adapt to the complex challenges of the modern operational environment.

The information presented in this guide helps Airmen understand the structure, values, principles, and standards of our enlisted force. It supersedes Air Force Handbook 36-2618, The Enlisted Force Structure, dated May 16, 2022.

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# THE ENLISTED FORCE STRUCTURE

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## Chapter 1 – THE ENLISTED PROFESSION OF ARMS

### OVERVIEW

This handbook defines our enlisted force and identifies the purpose, standards, and expectations for enlisted Airmen. The foundation of our enlisted force is deeply rooted in a rich heritage, commitment to duty, and dedication to upholding the highest standards. All Airmen must embody the warrior ethos: a professional combat-ready attitude, demonstrating unwavering resilience and a commitment to excellence in all aspects of military life. The mission requires disciplined, physically fit, and mentally strong Airmen who remain ready to face any challenge or adversary. Being an Airman is our core warfighting identity.

### A PROFESSION OF ARMS

As members of the Profession of Arms, we are warriors called to defend our nation against all threats. The central focus of the Profession of Arms is warfighting. This is a mindset designed to build the confidence and commitment necessary to shape warriors and work as a team to accomplish the mission. We must maintain the public's trust by adhering to high ethical standards, demonstrating competence, and reinforcing that we are responsible stewards of our nation's defense. All Airmen must understand their primary purpose is encapsulated in our Air Force mission: Fly, Fight, Win.

### THE OATH OF ENLISTMENT

"I [*state your full name*], Do solemnly swear (*or affirm*) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God (*optional*)."

### OUR CORE VALUES

Our Core Values, *Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do*, are the cornerstone of our service. This instruction outlines the requirements, responsibilities, and professional obligations of all enlisted personnel, ensuring we remain mission-ready and adaptable to the evolving operational environment. Furthermore, this document, paired with our Air Force Doctrine, defines us as Airmen first and specialist second.

***Victory Favors the Prepared!***

***"Our profession demands more than skill. It requires discipline, trust, and love for your fellow Wingmen."***

**CMSAF David A. Flosi  
20th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force**



## **AIRMAN'S CREED**

The Airman's Creed. The Airmen's Creed is our promise to our country and our fellow Airmen. We share an unbreakable trust and the will to never give up. Every Airman will know, understand, and embody the promise we make in our Airman's Creed. The Airman's Creed also sets the tone of our personal and professional lives while serving in the Air Force. This is where we embrace our Air Force family with our brothers and sisters in arms by connecting to the past, serving in the present, and preparing for future generations.

***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
I AM A WARRIOR.  
I HAVE ANSWERED MY NATION'S CALL.***

***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
MY MISSION IS TO FLY, FIGHT, AND WIN.  
I AM FAITHFUL TO A PROUD HERITAGE,  
A TRADITION OF HONOR,  
AND A LEGACY OF VALOR.***

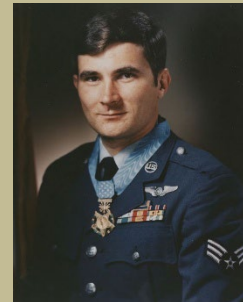
***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
GUARDIAN OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE,  
MY NATION'S SWORD AND SHIELD,  
ITS SENTRY AND AVENGER.  
I DEFEND MY COUNTRY WITH MY LIFE.***

***I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
WINGMAN, LEADER, WARRIOR.  
I WILL NEVER LEAVE AN AIRMAN BEHIND,  
I WILL NEVER FALTER,  
AND I WILL NOT FAIL.***

***AND I WILL NOT FAIL.***

***"I have been recognized as a hero for my 10 minutes of action over Vietnam, but I am no more a hero than anyone else who served this country."***

**Sgt. John L. Levitow  
Medal of Honor Recipient**



## PROFESSIONAL COURAGE

Air Force members are required to demonstrate moral and physical courage by standing up for what is right, even when facing uncertainty or unpopularity, holding their teams accountable, and making tough decisions. You must candidly and professionally express your best military advice and judgment to subordinates, peers, and superiors.

## THE ENLISTED AIRMAN

All members of the United States Air Force are referred to as “Airmen,” regardless of corps (officer, enlisted, civilian). Being an Airman in the United States Air Force means embodying the core identity of a **Wingman, Leader, and Warrior** as defined in our Airman’s Creed. As Enlisted Airmen, we have a different scope of responsibility and expertise unique from the officer corps. As part of the core identity, enlisted personnel are the backbone of the enlisted force, accomplishing daily operations, ensuring missions are executed efficiently and effectively. As Enlisted Airmen, our responsibilities often center around hands-on work and leadership in our respective organizations.

## WINGMAN

As a Wingman, we uphold the Air Force’s legacy of trust and camaraderie, ensuring no Airman stands alone in the face of adversity. This concept permeates Air Force culture in aviation and non-aviation circles and reminds each of us to constantly place the welfare of our wingmen above our own. “Supporting your Wingman” implies selflessness, trust, and a shared understanding of intent. From a service perspective, whether it is direct fires, aeromedical evacuation, command and control, logistics, or the joint fight, we are our nation’s Wingmen.

## LEADER

As a Leader, we embody the Air Force Core Values by assuming responsibility. Leaders make tactical, operational, or strategic decisions and ensure the effective execution of assigned missions. Leaders guide the growth of Airmen by offering mentorship, coaching, and support, developing resilience while preparing them to operate in dynamic roles. In high-pressure environments, they are tasked with leadership roles in peacetime and contested military operations. Leaders are expected to have extensive knowledge of military tactics, be skilled at assessing and mitigating risks, and maintain a focus on safety. They are adaptable in complex and high-pressure environments and set the example of Air Force Core Values. Leaders provide constructive feedback up and down the chain of command. As members of the Profession of Arms, all Airmen are held to a high standard. Leaders are held to even higher standards.

Leadership begins with being an effective follower. All Airmen must support and actively execute a leader’s guidance, orders, and direction. They bring technical expertise, accountability, and a strong commitment to the mission and the organization. Effective followers embody qualities such as cooperation, trust, and loyalty and excel in active listening and communication to fully align with the leader’s objectives. They are professional and proactive contributors to team goals, ready to step into informal leadership roles as needed. Followers provide valuable feedback, collaborate effectively with their peers, and confidently make difficult decisions for the benefit of the mission.

Airmen must continue both professional and personal development. Our Air Force leaders provide a common frame of reference among Air Force members to help each of us become better, more effective advocates of air and space power. A good place for Airmen to start is the [DoD and AF Libraries](#) and [Air Force Senior Leadership Libraries](#).

## **WARRIOR**

Being a Warrior means we stand ready to defend our nation with unwavering commitment, discipline, and courage. We are entrusted with both the nation's most advanced weapons systems and its sons and daughters. Using advanced technologies, our role is vital in ensuring mission success in every domain. We are entrusted to ensure national security, safeguard all classified information, and be mindful of those who would do us harm. Regardless of Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC), we apply our followership, expertise, and leadership to mission command principles and execute with precision. Our responsibilities often place us in high-pressure situations where split-second decisions can mean the difference between life and death. These responsibilities demand that each Airman develop a warrior ethos mindset that demonstrates their confidence and commitment to work as a team, to accomplish the mission, and always ready to fight and win our nation's wars.

## **READINESS**

Readiness is multi-faceted. Each of us must actively develop our readiness skills to ensure we are prepared to execute when called upon to do so. As Airmen, we must support the mission, both in garrison and while deployed. Regardless of our organization's mission, there is a high probability that we will be called to perform mission requirements that fall outside our specialty skill set.

Technical readiness. Airmen must continuously develop through training, education, and hands-on experience. This applies to both the overall mission and our specialty skill set requirements. From establishing a forward operating location to contributing to mission success and defending the base, each of us must know how to perform multi-faceted mission requirements. It is the individual's responsibility to gain and maintain professional competence. Airmen must know our AF instructions, handbooks, standard operating procedures, tactics, techniques, and procedures, and be informed on current policies. Airmen must share what they know with their organizations so everyone develops professional competency. Each individual is responsible for ensuring OPSEC procedures and other protections of classified information and materials are followed.

Physical Readiness. As warfighters, we must ensure we are physically fit for any environment in accordance with Department of the Air Force Manual 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program*. This includes adherence to an exercise regimen, maintaining a healthy and nutritiously balanced diet to optimize energy, and balancing strength and recovery to maximize individual capabilities. Additionally, each of us is responsible for our Individual Medical Readiness (IMR). IMR includes completing our annual Physical Health Assessment, annual dental exams, required lab work, and staying up to date with immunizations.

Mental Readiness. Each of us must develop resiliency skills that will allow us to recover quickly from setbacks and adapt to change during high-stress situations. This readiness skillset is different for each of us and will require enduring efforts to strengthen our resilience.

Family Readiness. All Airmen, not just those with dependents, must ensure our family is ready regardless of the situation (natural disaster, military conflicts, etc.). Educating the family on the mission and the Profession of Arms ensures we can respond quickly and skillfully to any scenario. Being familiar with resources such as [Military OneSource](#), Military and Family Readiness Center (M&FRC), and Key Support Liaisons at your assigned installation will help facilitate readiness as a warfighter and prepare those who support you in your military career.

Personal Financial Readiness. For military members financial stability has proven to be a strong protective factor against distress, distraction, relationship turmoil, impact to security clearances, and susceptibility to negative influence from outside actors. Thus, financial readiness is part of mission readiness and requires that each of us, and our immediate family members, take deliberate action to

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

understand and effectively manage finances, ensuring personal finances are always in order. Financial Readiness Education is available to each of us through various means. The Air Force provides Financial Readiness education and counselors through the M&FRC and at different levels of Professional Military Education (PME).

If you are employed in place, you are required to remain in a positive readiness state. If at any point in time, you are non-deployable, you will work to progress back to a deployable and mission-ready state.

### **OWNERSHIP**

You are a member of an elite team. You should acknowledge, understand, and accept your commitment as an Airman in the Enlisted Force Structure. A member of the Airman's chain of command should issue, review, discuss, and sign Table 1 on the date of issuance. This document should be reviewed and acknowledged by the owner and a member of their chain of command on an annual basis, at a minimum.

## Chapter 2 – LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

### FORCE STRUCTURE

The Enlisted Force is structured into three tiers.

**Junior Enlisted Tier.** Airman Basic (E-1), Airman (E-2), Airman First Class (E-3), Senior Airman (E-4).

**Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Tier.** Staff Sergeant (E-5), Technical Sergeant (E-6).

**Senior Noncommissioned Officer (SNCO) Tier.** Master Sergeant (E-7), Senior Master Sergeant (E-8), Chief Master Sergeant (E-9).

### LEADERSHIP LEVELS

Each tier corresponds to increasing levels of leadership and responsibility. Additionally, each leadership level drives mission over function and builds a positive Air Force culture. Most enlisted Airmen operate at the tactical and operational levels.

**Tactical.** Development at the tactical expertise level includes a general understanding of team leadership and an appreciation for organizational leadership. At this level, Airmen must master core duty skills, gain experience in applying those skills, and begin acquiring knowledge and experience essential for demonstrating effective ethical leadership. Airmen learn to become mission-focused specialists, and technical experts in core skill sets, while assimilating into the Air Force culture, and adopting our Core Values. The tactical level is a time for honing followership abilities, motivating subordinates, and influencing peers to accomplish the mission while developing a warrior ethos and exercising communication skills as effectively and efficiently as possible.

**Operational.** Development at the operational leadership level includes developing a broader understanding of the USAF perspective and the integration of diverse capabilities in operational execution. It is a time to ascend to a higher leadership capacity while applying an understanding of organizational and team dynamics. Airmen also foster and collaborate relationships through building teams and coalitions, especially within large organizations, and negotiating with others, often external to the organization.

**Strategic.** Development at the strategic vision level includes combining advanced personnel and people/team institutional competencies, applying broad organizational competencies, while leading and directing exceptionally complex and multi-tiered organizations. It is a time to develop a deep understanding of how Airmen achieve synergistic results and desired effects with their operational capabilities. Airmen employ military capabilities, understand the operational and strategic arts, and have a thorough understanding of unit, USAF, joint, and coalition capabilities. Development at the strategic level includes an enterprise perspective with a thorough understanding of the structure and relationships needed to accomplish strategic objectives. The strategic level focuses on Airmindedness and advances the Air Force mission in joint environments.

## **RANK AND AUTHORITY**

Within enlisted grades, NCOs take rank and responsibility over all junior enlisted and other NCOs according to rank. Within the same grade, use: date of rank, total active federal military service date, pay date, and date of birth, in this order, to determine seniority. In valid circumstances, commanders may place NCOs who are lower in rank in charge of other NCOs of the same grade (i.e., a Technical Sergeant, with a date of rank of 1 Apr 08, is placed in charge of a fellow Technical Sergeant, with a date of rank of 1 Apr 07). When placed in charge, these NCOs have authority to issue lawful orders appropriate for mission accomplishment. The Air Force will typically follow the normal chain of command, for example: Junior Enlisted to NCO and NCO to SNCO. At certain times, there will be opportunities for others to be placed in the position of authority.

Following orders and regulations is a cornerstone of military discipline and effectiveness. The UCMJ and AF policies and instructions give NCOs and SNCOs authority to issue lawful orders and hold Airmen accountable. Authorities are also derived from commissioned officers, who hold inherent command authority, and delegate to noncommissioned officers.

Airmen, regardless of rank, can have specific authorities based on occupational requirements. For example, an Airman managing the entry control point of an installation executes authorities delegated by the installation commander. Another example is the authority earned by a 7-level maintenance NCO who signs off the safety of flight requirements of a multi-million-dollar aircraft before it is presented to the pilot.

## **AIRMAN LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

ALQs are derived from foundational competencies and measure specific performances and behaviors. Foundational competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities that manifest in an observable and measurable pattern of behavior. Every member of the United States Air Force must align the following ALQs, they can be found on the AF Form 724-A and in AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems*.

**Executing the Mission.** Job proficiency demonstrates knowledge and professional skill in assigned duties, achieving positive results and impact in support of the mission.

**Initiative.** Assesses and takes independent or direct action to complete a task or mission that influences the mission or organization.

**Adaptability.** Adjusts to changing conditions, to include plans, information, processes, requirements, and obstacles in accomplishing the mission.

**Leading People.** Fosters teamwork, inclusion, and accountability. Inspires others through clear communication, mentorship, and example, creating an environment where Airmen excel.

**Teamwork.** Collaborates effectively with others to achieve a climate in pursuit of a common goal or to complete a task or mission.

**Emotional Intelligence.** Exercises self-awareness and manages their own emotions effectively; demonstrates an understanding of others' emotions and appropriately manages relationships.

**Communication.** Articulates information in a clear and timely manner, both verbally and non-verbally, through active listening and messaging tailored to the appropriate audience.

**Managing Resources.** Efficiently uses time, equipment, and funds to support the mission. Prioritizes needs, reduces waste, and ensures resources are available to meet objectives.

**Stewardship.** Demonstrates responsible management of assigned resources, which may include time,

equipment, people, funds, and/or facilities.

**Accountability.** Takes responsibility for the actions and behaviors of self and/or team; demonstrates reliability and transparency.

**Decision Making.** Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions under one's control that weigh constraints, risks, and benefits. Utilize the DAF Leadership Libraries for development.

**Innovation.** Thinks creatively about different ways to solve problems, implements improvements, and demonstrates calculated risk-taking.

### **GENERAL POSITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

When properly applied, duty titles facilitate a quick understanding of an Airman's role and level of responsibility. The following duty titles are common throughout the enlisted force but may vary based on organizational structure. When published, duty titles may be specified in career field governing directives (i.e. Career Field Education and Training Plan (CFETP)). In each of these positions, Airmen are responsible for executing the mission, leading people, improving the unit, and managing resources at a level commensurate to their title.

**Supervisor.** Used for Junior Enlisted members and NCOs who have graduated from Airman Leadership School and are assigned as first-line supervisors. Junior Enlisted will not have the duty title "Supervisor" unless they are at least a Senior Airman and supervise the work of others and meet the above PME requirement. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring those under their charge are meeting all responsibilities and continuing to develop. Document designation should be included in the member's CFETP.

**Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC).** Used for NCOs responsible for a work center or element that typically has subordinate supervisors. NCOIC is also used for those whose primary duty is a unit-wide program or function management, even if they do not directly rate on personnel.

**Section Chief.** Used for SNCOs, and occasionally NCOs, responsible for a section with at least two subordinate work centers or elements.

**Flight Chief.** Used for SNCOs, and occasionally NCOs, who are the enlisted leaders of a flight.

**Manager.** Used for NCOs and SNCOs who are program, project, or policy managers at higher headquarters, unit, and A-staff levels. Managers may or may not have personnel working for them and may be the enlisted leader of the branch, division, or directorate.

**Superintendent.** Used for SNCOs in charge of functional responsibilities. Only SNCOs will hold the duty title of Superintendent.

**Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL).** Duty title reserved for commander-appointed senior enlisted members at a detachment, squadron, and applicable senior enlisted leader positions. Additionally, this title may be used for appointed senior enlisted leaders at higher headquarters who lead directorates and/or divisions. SELs provide vital leadership and management experience regarding organization, equipment, training, and mobilization of the unit to effectively meet home station and expeditionary mission requirements. SELs should be well-versed and able to advocate for future resources and adapt to evolving mission requirements.

**Chief.** Used for Chief Master Sergeants who are program, project, or policy managers at Numbered Air Force (NAF), Major Command (MAJCOM), Direct Reporting Unit (DRU), Field Operating Agency, Joint Staff, or Air Staff. Chiefs may or may not have personnel working for them and may be the enlisted leader of the branch, division, or directorate.

## The Enlisted Force Structure

**Career Field Manager (CFM).** Enlisted career field managers are typically Chief Master Sergeants, located at Headquarters Air Force, responsible for organizing one or more enlisted career fields. Their responsibilities include establishing career field entry requirements, developing/managing training plan requirements, evaluating training effectiveness, monitoring career field manning health, encompassing Air Force level expectations of all Airmen into the CFETP, and providing input on programs and policies. Additionally, through Enlisted Development Teams, CFMs ensure the most qualified Noncommissioned and Senior Noncommissioned Officers are placed into key leadership or key development positions utilizing talent management practices.

**Command Chief.** Reserved for Chief Master Sergeants who serve as the most senior enlisted advisor to commanders at key levels of command, such as a wing, DRU, NAF, Center, MAJCOM, or Combatant Command.

**Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.** The CMSAF is both a distinctive rank and duty position reserved for the highest senior non-commissioned officer in the United States Air Force. Serves as the senior enlisted advisor to the Air Force Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force, representing the interests of the Air Force to all levels of government.

### Developmental Duties

Throughout our career in the Air Force, seeking developmental duty roles is essential for both personal and professional growth. These positions offer unique opportunities to develop leadership skills, gain broader perspectives, and make a lasting impact on fellow Airmen and the mission. By stepping into roles, Airmen help shape the future of the force. Ultimately, developmental assignments allow Airmen to give back to the service in meaningful ways while preparing themselves for greater responsibilities ahead.

✦ **First Sergeant.** First Sergeants are responsible for all readiness, health, morale, welfare, and quality of life issues within their organizations. At home station and in expeditionary environments, their primary responsibility is to build and maintain a mission-ready force to execute home station and expeditionary mission requirements.

✦ **Recruiter.** The Air Force recruiter is the first Airman potential enlistees will ever meet. They represent the Air Force in communities throughout the world and must exhibit the highest levels of integrity, professionalism, military bearing, respect for authority, and exceptional dress and personal appearance. Recruiters are responsible for interviewing, screening, testing, and evaluating applicants from civilian sources; assisting and participating in special events such as state and municipal ceremonies, exhibits, fairs, parades, centennials, and sporting events; and performing other duties as required to achieve recruiting goals.

✦ **Military Training Instructor (MTI).** Military Training Instructors are responsible for shaping newly enlisted trainees into Airmen ready to serve in the United States Air Force. They must exhibit the highest levels of professional behavior, military bearing, respect for others, dress, and personal appearance. MTIs plan, organize, direct basic and initial military training, and determine requirements for training, facilities, space, equipment, visual aids, and supplies. They instruct trainees in dormitory setup, drill, and other training subjects using demonstration-performance and lecture methods and inspect and evaluate military training activities, personnel, and facilities. MTIs must be attuned to trainees' interpersonal interactions to identify and correct behaviors that are incompatible with military service and the *Profession of Arms*.

✦ **Military Training Leader (MTL).** Military Training Leaders supervise all assigned non-prior service Airmen during technical training. They evaluate standards of conduct, performance, military bearing, discipline, and create a culture of dignity and respect. While scheduling and conducting military training functions. MTLs establish incoming, outgoing, and student entry briefings; conduct individual and group interviews; motivate personnel to develop military attitudes, effective human relations, and social skills for improving interpersonal and military relations; and assist students in their personal adjustment to military life.

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✦ **Academy Military Training (AMT) Noncommissioned Officer.** Academy Military Training Noncommissioned Officers lead, mentor, instruct, develop, and supervise the United States Air Force cadets. AMTs serve as the principal advisor to the Cadet Squadron Commander on all issues relating to cadets. These trainers provide military training, exercise general supervision, and leadership, and prepare cadets to support mission requirements to ensure cadet and squadron success.

✦ **AFROTC Training Instructor.** Air Force ROTC Training Instructors serve as the detachment's key enlisted leader and as the primary enlisted advisor to the detachment commander/Professor of Aerospace (PAS) on cadet academics, professional development, military training, and discipline. They promote health, welfare and morale for all assigned cadets and provide oversight of administrative tasks for Enlisted Commissioning Programs (ECP) students, supporting cadet life cycle management, and completing actions for contracting and commissioning.

✦ **Technical Training Instructor.** Technical training instructors provide initial skills training and education for their Air Force specialty. They are technical experts in their career field and work closely with Air Force career field managers to develop training and education requirements necessary to award the 3-skill level; and plan, organize, and direct the training of all non-prior service Airmen and career Airmen cross-training into a new Air Force specialty.

✦ **Professional Military Education (PME) Instructor.** Professional Military Education Instructors use informal lectures, case studies, teaching interviews, guided discussions, and a variety of other teaching methods to provide instruction and education necessary to facilitate knowledge and understanding of *The Profession of Arms*. They plan, organize, and direct programs at Airman Leadership School, Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, and the Chief Leadership Academy. These instructors are responsible for delivering Professional Military Education courses that develop the foundational competencies for enlisted Airmen along their career continuum.

✦ **Development Advisor (DA).** Formerly known as Career Assistance Advisors, Airmen Development Advisors serve at the base level and advise commanders and supervisors on force development and force management programs. ADAs counsel Airmen on career progression and planning, monitor mandatory pay and benefits briefings and conduct advertising and publicity programs. Airmen Development Advisors are critical in connecting the force development ecosystem across military installations to support tiered competency-based progression.

✦ **Military & Family Readiness Center NCO (M&FRC).** Responsible for managing and supporting the Military & Family Readiness Center's mission to serve Airmen, DoD civilians, and their families. Their duties include developing family readiness programs for deployment cycles, supporting emergency and disaster response efforts, serving as a liaison with community organizations, and promoting M&FRC services.

✦ **Airmen Dormitory Leader (ADL).** Responsible for managing and supporting the Military & Family Readiness Center's mission to serve Airmen, DoD civilians, and their families. Their duties include developing family readiness programs for deployment cycles, supporting emergency and disaster response efforts, serving as a liaison with community organizations, and promoting M&FRC service.

*"When I think of the enlisted force, I see dedication, determination, loyalty, and valor."*

**CMSAF Paul W. Airey,**  
**1st Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force**  
\*Prisoner of War in World War II



## Chapter 3 – JUNIOR ENLISTED TIER

### GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As a **Junior Enlisted** member, you:

- ★ Adhere to evolving Air Force requirements throughout your career, exemplifying followership while growing to become a highly effective leader.
- ★ Uphold military customs, courtesies, and discipline.
- ★ Be an effective follower and teammate.
- ★ Maintain high levels of each facet of readiness.
- ★ Develop the ability to contribute beyond your core specialty.
- ★ Seek to understand and work within leadership's intent.
- ★ Demonstrate respect, commitment, and initiative when following orders.
- ★ Maintain high levels of each facet of readiness.
- ★ Execute all duties, instructions, and lawful orders in a timely and efficient manner.
- ★ Demonstrate professionalism, respect, and adherence to strict military standards.
- ★ Treat all service members with dignity and respect.
- ★ Demonstrate and apply all competencies within the Airmen Leadership Qualities.
- ★ Demonstrate professional courage. Refuse to compromise on safety and ethics, own your mistakes, and have the courage to speak up when something is not right.
- ★ Comprehend what Airmanship is and own your place in the Profession of Arms.
- ★ Live your life free from negative behaviors that violate the Profession of Arms or tarnish the Air Force Core Values.
- ★ Successfully progress through the Enlisted Airmanship Continuum of 100 (Basic Military Training), 200 (Technical Training), First Term Airman Course, 300 (Junior Enlisted Foundational Course), and 400 (Airman Leadership School).

### RANK SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

**Airman Basic.** Adapt to the military profession by acquiring knowledge of Air Force standards, customs, and courtesies, as well as striving to learn mission-focused requirements and occupational knowledge, under close supervision.

**Airman.** Adapt to the military lifestyle by learning and demonstrating military standards, customs, courtesies, and traditions. They will work to become mission-ready and technically proficient in assigned duties.

**Airman First Class.** Continue to work towards increasing mission-ready skills while continuing technical proficiency in assigned duties and work towards attaining their 5-skill level. They will follow lawful orders with attention to detail and professionalism.

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

**Senior Airman.** Develop supervisory and leadership skills and provide mentorship and training to Junior Enlisted Airmen or Noncommissioned Officers who have cross-trained into a new AFSC. Senior Airmen are accountable for enforcing standards and developing team cohesion. They will develop and apply basic leadership and problem-solving skills in operational settings. Senior Airman must complete Airman Leadership School (ALS) (Enlisted Airmanship Continuum Level 400) before assuming the grade of Staff Sergeant. Senior Airmen who have completed ALS, have been trained, qualified, and documentation in accordance with the Air Force Job Qualification Standard (AFJQS). Supervisor have been deemed ready by their commander, or designated position, may be entrusted to officially supervise Junior Enlisted.

## Chapter 4 – NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER (NCO) TIER

### GENERAL NCO RESPONSIBILITIES

As an **NCO**, you:

- ★ Grow from being a follower to being a leader in the Profession of Arms and set the example for others to follow.
- ★ Attain and maintain a skill level commensurate with your rank. Balance technical mastery with leadership development.
- ★ Know and understand your commander's goals and priorities and how you and your subordinates fit into that construct.
- ★ Create an environment free of behaviors that hinder performance and empower all members to achieve their full potential and maximize their contributions. Appropriately recognize and award individuals whose conduct, bearing, and performance clearly exceed established standards.
- ★ Stay professionally engaged with subordinates consistently both on and off duty.
- ★ Understand a subordinate's environment by visiting on-base living spaces and installation support facilities (e.g., dining facilities, chapel centers, recreation centers, dormitories, etc.).
- ★ Understand all the resources your specific base has available to support your Airmen and be able to appropriately refer them for assistance.
- ★ Commit to continuous personal and professional growth.
- ★ Develop your strategic acumen and encourage your team to do the same.
- ★ Have, at a minimum, a general understanding of the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy (NDS), National Military Strategy (NMS), and Air Force policies.
- ★ Develop operational expertise to prepare for the increased responsibilities and expectations of an SNCO.
- ★ Successfully progress through the Enlisted Airmanship Continuum of 500 (NCO Foundation Course) and 600 (NCO Academy).

### RANK SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

**Staff Sergeant.** Directly supervise Airmen, ensuring mission accomplishment and unit cohesion. Provide structured feedback and mentorship to subordinates. Enforce compliance with military standards, discipline, training, and operational effectiveness.

**Technical Sergeant.** In addition to maintaining Staff Sergeant responsibilities, you must understand and execute mission-focused requirements, be technical experts, and leaders driving mission-focused requirements. You must train and develop junior NCOs and enlisted personnel for increased responsibility. You are key enforcers of discipline, readiness, and (PME).

**NCO Charge.** NCOs are the backbone of the United States Air Force and bear the profound responsibility for the structural integrity of the enterprise. The NCO ranks of Staff Sergeant and Technical Sergeant mark a transition of leadership in duties and responsibilities. In addition to fulfilling the responsibilities of

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

Junior Enlisted Airmen, as an NCO you are charged with the following duties:

- ★ **You are charged** with increasing your knowledge, skills, and abilities to be ready for whatever is required of you. Become an expert in your profession and display a willingness and flexibility to do what the mission demands.
- ★ **You are charged** with leading by example to promote physical and mental readiness within your teams. Exercise our warrior ethos and prepare your Airmen to fight whenever duty calls.
- ★ **You are charged** to take an active role in the lives and careers of those you are privileged to lead. Seek to integrate and utilize the talents of your team, ensuring unity of purpose and action in defense of our Nation.
- ★ **You are charged** to serve as a blueprint of leadership by exemplifying self-discipline, proactively seeking opportunities for growth and advancing your Airmen's capabilities.
- ★ **You are charged** to aggressively execute the intent and priorities of your chain of command, while developing company grade officers to build expertise and leadership fundamentals. Seek guidance when needed and offer solutions to problems within your purview.
- ★ **You are charged** to embrace our Core Values and strictly adhere to Air Force expectations and standards, ensuring that your actions and those of your team are in full compliance to best foster an environment of trust, mutual respect, shared understanding, and unit cohesion.
- ★ **You are charged** to strive for excellence, demonstrating the highest standards of character, competence, professionalism, and discipline. In all aspects of your duty continually assess to improve your own performance and that of your team.

Your role as a Noncommissioned Officer is pivotal in equipping and readying our fighting formations. In accepting these responsibilities, you pledge your dedication to the United States Air Force and its enduring mission for our Nation to Fly, Fight, and Win – Airpower anytime, anywhere!

## **NCO AUTHORITIES**

You are expected to be confident as you exercise sound judgment, enforce standards, and lead with professionalism. You must understand that your leadership is both a privilege and a duty earned through competence, integrity, and commitment to the Profession of Arms. You are entrusted with the responsibility to lead, train, and develop Airmen while ensuring mission success. Your authority is derived from the (UCMJ), specifically, Article 7, Article 91, Article 92, Title 10 U.S. Code, Sections 101, 502, 1171, 12302, 12103, 3914, and Air Force policies.

As an NCO, you are accountable to execute these authorities. If you do not execute them, you are in violation of your responsibilities. A lawful order does not require the statement "I order you to (insert task)". A lawful order may be as simple as "The duty day starts at 0700" or "You must get a haircut that is in compliance with dress and appearance standards.". Your orders must be clear and concise. Provide your team members with the opportunity to ask for further guidance, if required.

## Chapter 5 – SENIOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER (SNCO) TIER

### GENERAL SNCO RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to meeting all NCO authorities and responsibilities, **SNCOs**:

- ★ Transform to be a leader of leaders. Your leadership is paramount as decisions are made and executed.
- ★ Guide our Air Force while preserving the rich legacy of our past.
- ★ Ensure adherence to standards, always holding yourself and your Airmen accountable.
- ★ Maintain an elevated level of readiness in all facets and ensure your teams do the same.
- ★ Be a critical component of mission success.
- ★ Connect and mentor your teams to Airmindedness.
- ★ Understand the dynamic mission sets of the unit, including organization, training, and equipping the team.
- ★ Shape and drive your teams through the complex mission requirements.
- ★ Enforce and promote a culture of adaptable teams capable of operating in an evolving environment.
- ★ Earn your team's trust and ensure they are empowered to address problems and develop solutions.
- ★ Create an environment that allows for risk-based decisions and for your team to learn from failures and mistakes.
- ★ Anticipate challenges and risks, while adapting the team's approach to achieving mission objectives, even in the face of complexity and uncertainty.
- ★ Serve as a key advisor to commanders, providing invaluable perspective, and shaping policies and informed decisions driving mission success.
- ★ Embody professional courage at the highest enlisted levels.
- ★ Set the ethical standard for your unit.
- ★ Encourage feedback at all levels.
- ★ Possess the moral courage to professionally challenge decisions, even up the chain of command, when necessary to protect both people and the mission.
- ★ Translate the Commander's intent into purpose, desired end state, and what must be accomplished.
- ★ Effectively lead your teams, regardless of their specialty, executing the principles of Mission Command to ensure mission accomplishment in garrison and in contested, degraded, or operationally limited environments.
- ★ Foster an environment where every team member understands their vital role in achieving overarching objectives.

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- ★ Operate effectively across all domains, leading your team, collaborating seamlessly in joint environments, and empowering Airmen, peers, and leaders by utilizing mutual trust and mentorship.
- ★ Champion continuous personal and professional growth.
- ★ Seek knowledge through appropriate books, courses, seminars, and continuous education.
- ★ Develop a deep understanding of Air Force doctrine, NSS, NDS, NMS, the annual National Defense Authorization Act, Air Force policies, mission command, and the strategic thinking that is crucial for effective leadership. Mission command is a philosophy of leadership that empowers Airmen to operate in uncertain, complex, and rapidly changing environments through trust, shared awareness, and understanding of the Commander's intent.
- ★ Cultivate your strategic acumen and foster its growth in your Airmen, peers, and leaders. Strategic acumen is more than just understanding the mission; it is seeing the bigger picture and making smart, informed decisions, leading to long-term success. This means anticipating challenges, accepting prudent risk, and adapting the team's approach to achieve mission objectives, even in the face of complexity and uncertainty.
- ★ Encourage cross-training, institutional position assignments, and opportunities that broaden perspectives and cultivate well-rounded Airmen.
- ★ Successfully progress through the Airmanship Continuum of 700 (SNCO Foundational Course), 800 (AFSNCOA), and 900 (Chief Leadership Course).
- ★ Champion the culture your commander envisions through your actions, guidance, and coaching.
- ★ Shape the organizational environment.
- ★ Set the tone for your Airmen. Do not underestimate your impact. You are the standard-bearer, the mentor, the leader who translates words into action. Your teams look to you, not just for guidance, but for how to be committed to the Air Force. Foster esprit de corps within your unit. Build bridges with the community.
- ★ Provide mentorship and support to junior officers as they learn how to lead teams and prepare them for greater responsibilities.
- ★ Live the Air Force Core Values with unwavering integrity. Every interaction, every decision, and every word you speak shapes the Air Force of tomorrow.

### **RANK SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Master Sergeant.** Must transition from tactical leadership to operational-level responsibilities. Oversee mission execution and personnel development within the unit. Serve as advisors to leadership, bridging enlisted and officer perspectives.

**Senior Master Sergeant.** Must provide guidance on enlisted force development and command decisions. Lead larger teams and enforce Air Force policies with strategic oversight. Serve as mentors to CGOs, SNCOs, NCOs and Junior Enlisted, preparing them for future leadership roles.

**Chief Master Sergeant.** Must be the senior enlisted leader and advisor to commanders, lead and manage teams, and bridge strategic plans with tactical execution. Shape Air Force culture by displaying and enforcing high standards of professionalism and discipline. Advocate for enlisted force development,

## *The Enlisted Force Structure*

policy implementation, personal and mission readiness. Analyze and evaluate complex environments enabling an informed perspective on strategic and enterprise-level focused issues.

**SNCO Charge.** The SNCO ranks of Master Sergeant, Senior Master Sergeant, and Chief Master Sergeant mark the pinnacle of leadership in our Enlisted Corps. As an SNCO, you are entrusted with the highest levels of leadership, responsibility, and expertise. In addition to the responsibilities of Junior Enlisted and NCO Tiers, you are charged with the following duties:

- ★ **You are charged** with integrating the talents, skills, and abilities of your subordinates with other teams to accomplish our mission with excellence while maintaining flexibility in execution. Be the bridge that connects our force, ensuring unity in purpose and action.
- ★ **You are charged** with effectively communicating across the chain of command, translating orders into actionable tasks and advocating for your Airmen and their families.
- ★ **You are charged** with the development of self, others, ideas, and organizations. Capitalize on Joint, Interagency, Interorganizational, and Multinational development opportunities, building partnership capacity in defense of our Nation.
- ★ **You are charged** with demonstrating the principles of self-discipline and independent action through continued education, training, and career-broadening. In all facets highlight a willingness to do what the mission demands.
- ★ **You are charged** with fulfilling a unique and critical role in officer development at the squadron, group, wing, and higher headquarter levels. Utilize your extensive experience and expertise in supporting and advising officers to successfully lead Airmen of all ranks and backgrounds.
- ★ **You are charged** with honoring our heritage while also serving as a leader for the next generation. Embrace our Core Values while modeling a comprehensive knowledge of Air Force foundational competencies.
- ★ **You are charged** with cultivating a professional climate and culture within your teams, enforcing high standards, and combined focus on mission execution. Clarify leadership orders, expectations, and swiftly correct behaviors that detract from good order and discipline.

*“People don't care how much we know ... until they know how much we care.”*

**CMSAF Robert D. Gaylor**  
**5th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force**



## CONCLUSION

**Our Airmen are the strength behind the world's most lethal Air Force.** Their readiness, innovation, leadership, and commitment to growing themselves and others ensure we remain unmatched. This guide sets the standard and provides the foundation our enlisted force needs to deliver on mission requirements.














**We are a team of highly trained, specialized experts in the Profession of Arms.** To maximize our collective strength, we enforce clear, shared expectations providing opportunities for development and professional growth at all ranks.

**Wherever we serve and whatever mission we are assigned, our enlisted Airmen are indispensable to delivering Airpower—Anytime, Anywhere.**

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The Enlisted Force Structure

Terms of Address by Rank

Grade	E-1	E-2	E-3	E-4	E-5	E-6	E-7	E-8	E-9	CMSAF
Term of Address	Airman Basic Airman	Airman (Amn) Airman	Airman First Class (A1C) Airman	Senior Airman (SrA) Airman	Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Sergeant	Technical Sergeant (TSgt) Tech Sergeant Sergeant	Master Sergeant (MSGT) Sergeant First Sergeant	Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) Sergeant Senior First Sergeant	Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) Chief First Sergeant Command Chief Master Sergeant	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) Chief
Insignia	No Insignia						 	 	  	



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**OUR MISSION:  
FLY, FIGHT, & WIN...  
AIRPOWER ANYTIME, ANYWHERE**

