

**COMMON TRAINING**

**ALL TRAINING LEVELS**

**INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE**
**CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**
**(CAF) FAMILIARIZATION**

**SECTION 4**

**EO MX20.01D – PARTICIPATE IN A MESS DINNER**

Total Time: One session = 90 min

## PREPARATION

### PRE-LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

This IG supports EO MX20.01D (Participate in a Mess Dinner) located in A-CR-CCP-801/PG-001, *Royal Canadian Air Cadets Proficiency Level One Qualification Standard and Plan*, Chapter 4.

One week prior to the mess dinner, photocopy and distribute the appropriate elemental Cadet Mess Dinner pamphlet, located at Annexes A–C, for each cadet.

One week prior to the mess dinner, photocopy and distribute the Role of the President of the Mess Committee (PMC) handout, located at Annex D, to the cadet filling the role of PMC.

One week prior to the mess dinner, photocopy and distribute the Role of the Vice-President of the Mess Committee (VPMC) handout, located at Annex E, to the cadets filling the role of VPMC.

Refer to the Organize a Mess Dinner Aide-Memoire located at Annex F to guide the preparation of the mess dinner.

Brief the cadets on the expected dress for the mess dinner.

### PRE-LESSON ASSIGNMENT

Have the cadets read the applicable Cadet Mess Dinner pamphlet in preparation for the mess dinner.

### APPROACH

A practical activity was chosen for this lesson as it is an interactive way to allow cadets to experience a mess dinner in a safe, controlled environment. This activity is an interactive way to build on the cadets' knowledge of the CAF.

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

Nil.

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session the cadets shall have participated in a mess dinner.



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## IMPORTANCE

The mess dinner is a ceremonial occasion when military personnel dine together formally and is one of the most important traditions of the CAF. Historically, military organizations have taken on a life and routine based upon discipline, order, and traditions that differ from civilian life. This boosts morale and develops esprit de corps.

## ACTIVITY




The protocols and procedures for a Mess Dinner must be adapted to fit the regulations of the Cadet Program. While the tradition in the CAF calls for the serving of alcohol, IAW CATO 13-23, *Drug and Alcohol Policy*, cadets will not be served alcohol. Grape juice may be substituted for port during a cadet mess dinner.

1. Conduct a mess dinner, to include:
   a. pre-dinner gathering,
   b. mess calls,
   c. arrival of the head table,
   d. dinner,
   e. passing of the port,
   f. loyal toast,
   g. marches,
   h. speeches, and
   i. departure of the head table.
2. Have the cadets sign a guest book reflecting on their experience.

## CONCLUSION

### METHOD OF EVALUATION

Nil.

### CLOSING STATEMENT

Participating in a mess dinner has allowed you to experience CAF customs, traditions, and rituals. Mess dinners are happy occasions that allow all members, regardless of rank, to meet on an occasion where good manners are expected.

### INSTRUCTOR NOTES / REMARKS

There are numerous leadership opportunities for cadets when conducting a mess dinner:

- Phase Five / Master Cadet / Proficiency Level Five cadets may plan, prepare and conduct the mess dinner as a leadership project IAW PO 503 (Lead Cadet Activities); and
- Phase Three / Silver Star / Proficiency Level Three, Phase Four / Gold Star / Proficiency Level Four, and Phase Five / Master Cadet / Proficiency Levels Five cadets may complete leadership assignments



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such as acting as the Mess President and the Mess Vice-Presidents IAW POs 303 (Perform the Role of a Team Leader), 403 (Act as a Team Leader), and 503 (Lead Cadet Activities).

The organization of the mess dinner shall be based on human and material resources available to the corps / squadron.

## REFERENCES

A-CR-050-801/PH-001 Directorate of Cadets 6. (2009). *Training plan DP1 Cadet Instructors Cadre: Basic Officer Training Course*. Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence.

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HMCS Queen Regina's Naval Reserve Division. (2009). *Chief Petty Officers & Petty Officers mess dinner naval customs*. Retrieved April 28, 2009, from http://www.hmcsqueen.ca/cpomessdinner.pdf.

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## ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE MESS COMMITTEE (PMC)

### Greeting the Guest of Honour

The PMC shall meet the guest of honour in the foyer of the mess, escort them into the before-dinner gathering and introduce them to the attendees and guests.

### Escorting the Official Host or Guest of Honour

A bugler / piper, when available, shall make the appropriate calls to announce dinner. Following the second call, the PMC shall escort the guest of honour to the head table. In the absence of a bugler / piper, the mess call may be verbal.

### Grace

Once the chief steward has advised the Vice-President of the Mess Committee (VPMC) that everyone is present, the PMC shall rap the gavel and ask the chaplain, or a previously designated member (often the most junior member present), to say grace.

### Passing the Port

The PMC will indicate that the port may be passed by pouring a small amount of port into a glass, tasting it, and passing the decanter to the left.

### Saying the Loyal Toast

The PMC calls upon the VPMC to toast the Queen of Canada. For example, they may say, “Mr. Vice, The Queen of Canada”, or “Monsieur le vice-president, La Reine du Canada”. The Vice-President announces, in the other official language, “Ladies and gentlemen, The Queen of Canada” or, “Mesdames et messieurs, La Reine du Canada”. Diners announce individually “The Queen / La Reine” and take the Loyal Toast.

### Dismissing for Breaks

The PMC may decide that a short break is needed if lengthy after-dinner speeches and presentations are scheduled. The break may be given before or after the passing of the port. The PMC shall announce that the head table members will leave the dining room first for the break and give a duration for the break. At the end of the break, the PMC shall rap the gavel for attention.

### Introducing the Guest of Honour

The PMC shall introduce the guest of honour and other head table guests at an appropriate time during the dinner. All speeches are given after the toasts after which the PMC will make any announcements appropriate to the occasion.

### Misbehaviour and Fines

When misbehaviour or transgressions of the rules of order in the mess occur, the PMC may:

1. warn the diner;
2. order an apology;
3. order a performance;
4. order a fine;
5. order the person to leave the mess; or
6. order any other fine deemed acceptable.



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A member coming late to dinner may have their excuse accepted, but be refused permission to dine. The member may also be fined.

The following guidelines apply to fines:

- Fines imposed on a guest must be paid by their host.
- Fines are paid after the toasts.
- A diner may call the PMC's attention to a misdemeanour, but would be wise to ask permission to repeat, or demonstrate the infractions of the rules as to avoid a fine.

When dinner is finished and the tables cleared the senior steward reports to the President, "Table cleared, Sir / Ma'am".

**Departing the Dining Room**

When all speeches have concluded, the PMC indicates the end of the dinner and leads the head table out of the dining room.



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## ROLE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE MESS COMMITTEE (VPMC)

As VPMC of the mess dinner you will assist the President of the Mess Committee (PMC) in maintaining order and, depending upon your corps / squadron, will:

### Maintain Order

The VPMC can assist the PMC by controlling the behaviour of the table leg for which they are responsible and calling attention to inappropriate behaviour from other legs. The VPMC can also suggest appropriate fines for inappropriate behaviour.

### Directing the Attendees to the Dining Room

The VPMC shall ensure that all personnel move quickly into the dining room and take position as soon as all personnel have entered the dining room. The chief steward shall discretely advise the VPMC that everyone is present.

### Pass on Messages to the President from Members

If a diner wishes to address the PMC, they should make their wish known to a VPMC who then raps the gavel for silence, stands, faces the PMC and asks permission for the member to address the PMC.

### Call to the PMC's Attention any Misbehaviour from other Tables

It is the duty of the VPMC to assist the PMC in maintaining order and discipline. As such, the VPMC needs to be aware of the conduct of all members of the mess, not just the members of which they are responsible. If the VPMC notices any behaviour that they feel is against the order and etiquette expected, they should bring it to the attention of the PMC.

### Begin Passing the Port

If there are multiple decanters of port, the VPMC may control the passing of the port to the members of which they are responsible. The VPMC passes the port to the left and stoppers the decanter once it has made its way around the table. The VPMC pour their port last.

### Give the Loyal Toast

The PMC calls upon the VPMC to toast the Queen of Canada. For example, they may say, “Mr. Vice, The Queen of Canada”, or “Monsieur le vice-president, La Reine du Canada”. The Vice-President announces, in the other official language, “Ladies and gentlemen, The Queen of Canada” or, “Mesdames et messieurs, La Reine du Canada”.



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## ORGANIZE A MESS DINNER AIDE-MEMOIRE

**DRESS**. The mess dinner is traditionally a formal dinner. As such, members attending the mess dinner are dressed in formal attire. Members of the military would wear the Number 2 order of dress, called mess dress, and this is true for cadets as well. Check the applicable dress CATO for further clarification.

**OFFICIAL HOST**. The Official Host of the Mess Dinner shall normally be the Commanding Officer of the cadet corps / squadron or representative.

**GUEST OF HONOUR**. The Guest of Honour, if there is one, shall be escorted to the mess by the President of the Mess Committee (PMC). In the absence of a Guest of Honour, the Official Host may be used.

**PMC GREETING**. The PMC shall meet the Official Host and the senior guest in the foyer of the mess and shall escort them to the before-dinner gathering where they shall present them to the mess membership.

**MESS CALL**. A signal (bugler, piper, recorded music, verbal cue) shall call the assembly to dinner. The first call occurs 15 minutes prior to the start of dinner. The second call occurs 5 minutes prior to the start of dinner. Following the second call, the PMC shall escort the Official Host / Guest of Honour to the head table. The Vice-President of the Mess Committee (VPMC) shall ensure that all personnel move quickly into the dining room and shall take their position as soon as all personnel have entered the dining room. Once assembled personnel have taken their position behind their respective seats, the VPMC informs the PMC that everyone is present. At that point the PMC shall rap his/her gavel and ask the previously designated member (quite often the most junior member present), to say grace. At the completion of grace, all shall be seated.

**INTRODUCTION BY PMC**. At the beginning of the dinner after everyone is seated the PMC shall introduce the head table.

**DINNER ETIQUETTE**. The mess dinner is a time to appreciate the fellowship and conversation of fellow personnel and guests, to enjoy good food and to enjoy relaxed formality in an elegant setting. Diners should not display immature or offensive behaviour.

**FINES**. If members behave in an immature or offensive manner they may be fined. If not taken to an extreme this can be an entertaining part of a mess dinner. Fines are imposed for members who break, bend, or knowingly conceal a breech of mess rules by another member.

Fines levied against an individual may vary:

- dismissal from the mess;
- apology;
- performance;
- warning; or
- any other fine deemed acceptable by the President.

**BREAK**. On occasions where lengthy after-dinner formalities such as speeches and presentations are scheduled, the PMC may decide that a short break is needed which, at their discretion, may occur before or after the passing of the Port depending on the number and length of speeches and the number of diners in attendance. At the end of the break, the PMC shall rap the gavel for attention.

**PASSING THE PORT**. After the last course has been served and the tables have been cleared or after the break, decanters shall be placed on the tables. The Mess Manager or person acting as Chief Steward shall indicate to the PMC that the Port is ready to be passed. At that point the stoppers shall be removed, and the PMC will indicate that the Port may be passed by pouring a small amount of Port into their glass, tasting it, and passing the decanter to the left. The passing of the port shall be done in accordance with elemental tradition. Once Port has been poured into the glass, it shall not be touched until it is time for the Loyal Toast.



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**ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**. As per regulation, alcoholic beverages shall not be served at the mess dinner. Grape juice shall be used to uphold the tradition of passing the Port. All references to Port in this document refer to Grape Juice.

**LOYAL TOAST**. When the Mess Manager, or person acting as Chief Steward, has indicated to the PMC that all have been served Port, the PMC shall rap the gavel for attention, all conversation shall cease, the PMC shall rise, and shall announce to the Vice-PMC, either, "Mr. Vice, The Queen of Canada", or "Monsieur le vice président, La Reine du Canada". The Vice-PMC will then rise and announce in the other official language, "(ladies and) gentlemen, The Queen of Canada" or, "(Mesdames et) messieurs, La Reine du Canada", as appropriate. At that point all personnel and guests shall rise and shall pick up their glass of Port and hold it at waist level announcing individually, in French or English, "The Queen"/"La Reine", and take the Loyal Toast. Glasses shall be lowered to the table, and the assembly shall be seated. It is important to note that it is naval tradition to remain seated for the loyal toast.

**DEPARTING THE DINING ROOM**. When all speeches have been concluded and the Official Host has indicated to the PMC that it is time to depart the dining room, all in attendance shall rise and remain standing until the Official Host, Senior Guest, PMC, and head table guests have moved from the dining room.

**SEATING ARRANGEMENT**. The tables of the mess dinner can be arranged in many ways. They may be arranged as a long table or a head table with several legs. The seating of the PMC and VPMC may also vary. Below are some examples of seating arrangements.

When placing members at tables, it is important to have a mix of ranks at each table. Whenever possible, genders should be mixed. Tables should be filled from the head table towards the end of the leg and there should never be empty place settings. If a member is unable to attend, their place setting should be removed and the remaining members should spread to fill in the empty space.

Figure DF-1 Sample Elemental Dinner Arrangements

| Symbol | Meaning |
|---|---|
| A | Invited Guests |
| B | President of the Mess Committee |
| C | Vice President of the Mess Committee |

**PLACE SETTINGS**. Traditionally, mess dinners are a formal occasion with formal place settings. A variety of utensils may be used. Diners should use utensils starting with the utensils on the outside. Utensils are changed with each course of the meal.

A variety of glasses may also be used. Each glass has a specific purpose. As there will be no alcohol served during the dinner, it is acceptable to only use one glass.

Figure DF-2 Table Setting

Napkin and Dinner Roll (Item A)

The napkin and dinner roll will be placed on the table at the place setting prior to diners taking their seats.

Salad Fork (Item B)

The first course is either a mixed green or fruit salad. Eat the salad with the salad fork found on the extreme left of the dinner plate. No knife is to be used with the salad. If the salad cannot be picked up with the fork it must be left on the plate. Do not push food onto the fork with fingers.



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While eating the appetizer, the fork should be laid at a 45-degree angle from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed, the fork is placed at a six o'clock on the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Soup Spoon (Item G)

Eat the soup with the soup spoon found on the extreme right of the dinner plate. Soup is always taken from the side of the spoon. The motion of the spoon should be from the front to the back of the bowl. Never tip the bowl to get the last drop or blow on the soup to cool it.

While eating the soup, the spoon should be laid at a 45-degree angle from the centre of the bowl to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the spoon is placed at a six o'clock in the bowl to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Fish Fork and Knife (Items C and F)

Use the fish knife found on the extreme right and the middle fork to eat the fish course. Place the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left. A left-handed person may reverse the cutlery. While eating the fish, the fork and knife should be laid at a 45-degree angle from one another from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the fork and knife are placed together at a 45-degree angle from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Dinner Fork and Knife (Items D and E)

Use the last set of cutlery on either side of the plate to eat the main course. The cutlery is held in the same way as the fish course. Never pick up the meat with the hands. Only eat what can be cut with the knife and fork.

While eating the main course, the fork and knife should be laid at a 45-degree angle to one another from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the fork and knife are placed together at a 45-degree to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Dessert Service (Item H)

The last course is dessert. There are two pieces of cutlery laid out for dessert found at the top of the place setting. It is only necessary to use one. The dessert is the end of the meal, but not the end of the dinner. While eating the desert, the spoon or fork should be laid at a 45-degree angle to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the spoon or fork is placed at six o'clock on the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Water Glass (Item M)

Water will be served to all members prior to the start of the dinner.



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