Lesson Preparation:
• ROTC: Read this complete lesson reader.
• OTS: Read part I of this lesson reader when directed; read part II of this lesson reader when directed.

Cognitive Lesson Objective:
• Apply Air Force dress and appearance standards.

Cognitive Samples of Behavior:
• Define male and female hair standards.
• Identify violations of AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel.
• Identify appropriate and inappropriate wear of eyeglasses, sunglasses, jewelry, and cosmetics.
• Identify proper wear of the Air Force Service Dress and other Service Uniform combinations.
• List occasions when wear of the Air Force uniform is prohibited.

Affective Lesson Objective:
• Respond consistently to Air Force dress and appearance standards.

Affective Sample of Behavior:
• Conform to AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of the Air Force Personnel.
PART I

As an officer, you must display the qualities of a leader and apply the techniques of leadership. You'll set the example, so make it a good one! The manner in which you follow dress and grooming standards reflects pride in yourself, your profession, your unit, and the Air Force. You should always strive to exceed the minimum standards in all you do, especially in dress and grooming—lead by example!

The Air Force dress and grooming standards are a mixture of tradition and practicality. The uniform draws attention to the individual. The image you present will leave a lasting impression about you and the entire Air Force on everyone you meet. Any large business or organization that wants to be recognized as professional sets certain standards of dress and grooming for its personnel. The Air Force is no different. The American public draws certain conclusions about military effectiveness based on the image that Air Force members present. It's been said that a military officer can be picked out of a crowd just by the image he or she presents. Certainly, one's weight control, military bearing, and confidence are part of this image. The image of a disciplined service member who can be relied on to do the job excludes the extreme, the unusual, and the faddish.

Personal cleanliness, disciplined behavior, and pride in the uniform will directly affect morale in the everyday work environment. It's up to us to maintain ourselves as the professionals we are. More importantly, however, each of us represents the Air Force and the United States in general. Discredit on one brings discredit on all.

Uniforms must be clean, neat, and correct in design and specifications, fitted properly, pressed, and in good condition (i.e., not frayed, worn out, faded, torn, patched, etc.). All closures are to be kept zipped, snapped, or buttoned. Shoes requiring shining must be shined and in good repair. All service uniforms are authorized for year-round wear, unless the installation commander prescribes otherwise. As we explain the various uniform combinations, we'll concentrate on the officer's uniform. For information on proper wear of uniforms by enlisted Airmen, consult AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of the Air Force Personnel.

BASIC PHILOSOPHY AND ENFORCEABILITY

The Air Force philosophy is that the uniform will be plain, distinctive, and standardized. This standardization includes a minimum number of authorized badges, insignia, and devices.

Individual pride in one's personal appearance and in wearing the uniform greatly enhances the esprit de corps essential to an effective military force. Therefore, it's most important for all members to maintain a high standard of dress and personal appearance. The four elements of this standard are neatness, cleanliness, safety, and military image. The first
three are absolute, objective criteria needed for the efficiency and well-being of the Air Force. The fourth military image is subjective, but necessary.

Appearance in-uniform is an important part of military image. Judgment on what is the proper image differs in and out of the military. The American public and its elected representatives draw certain conclusions about our military effectiveness based on the image that Air Force members present. The image must instill public confidence and leave no doubt that service members live by a common standard and respond to military order and discipline. Each member has the responsibility to maintain an “acceptable military image” as well as the right, within limits, to express individuality through his or her appearance.

Members will wear only the uniform items prescribed by AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of the Air Force Personnel. Personnel who violate the specific prohibitions and requirements of that regulation may be subject to appropriate administrative action or prosecuted under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

WEAR OF THE AIR FORCE UNIFORM

Except when authorized to wear civilian clothes according to AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of the Air Force Personnel, Airmen will wear the appropriate Air Force uniform while performing their military duties.

Personnel assigned to non-Air Force military installations will comply with the order of dress that most nearly conforms to the order of dress for the particular host service, for example, service uniform, combat uniform, and so forth. When the host service order of dress is a combat uniform, Airmen will wear the Airman Battle Uniform (ABU). When authorized, members may also wear distinctive berets.

Airmen attending a special event, either social or official, must wear the service dress uniform unless the host or hostess requests civilian dress or the commander specifies otherwise. Airmen wear the service dress uniform when the Air Force would benefit by having its representatives appear in that uniform. This rule applies to all social events not of a purely personal nature. A member who receives a written invitation that doesn't specify the dress required should ask the social secretary or the secretary of the host organization for recommendations as to the expected dress. When several Air Force activities are in the same locality, the senior commander will determine the proper dress uniforms for specific seasons.

Optional uniform items may be worn when a required item isn’t prescribed. Commanders won’t direct the wear of optional items unless these items are provided at no cost to Airmen. Commanders won’t prohibit the wear of optional items.

Members may alter uniform clothing to improve fit. However, these alterations must not change the intended appearance or required function of the uniform as designed.
Terms Explained

As used here, these terms mean the following:

- **Right or Left.** The wearer's right or left.

- **Installation Commander.** The person who is responsible for and controls the personnel, facilities, equipment, and real estate constituting an Air Force base, station, operating location, etc.

- **On-Duty.** The hours a person is actually at work, as required by assignment.

- **Mandatory Uniform.** A complete uniform combination of selected items from Airmen's mandatory clothing.

- **Mandatory Clothing Items.** Uniform clothing items each Airman must always have, according to AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of the Air Force Personnel.

- **Optional Clothing Items.** A uniform clothing item, other than a mandatory clothing item, approved for wear by all Air Force personnel.

- **Accoutrements.** Medals, ribbons, insignia, badges, emblems, tags, scarves, gloves, etc., authorized for wear on or with any uniform.

- **Service Uniforms.** All authorized blue uniform combinations.

Basic Policy

As an Airman, you’re always in the public eye. The image you present reflects on us all. Therefore, it’s extremely important you make a positive impression at all times.

**Personal Hygiene.** This is at an individual's discretion. All Airmen should bathe and use toiletries as necessary to prevent any offensive odors.

**Personal Grooming.** Airmen must present a professional image at all times. Members should also appear neat and well groomed. Additionally, as stated before, avoid extreme and faddish styles.
PERSONAL GROOMING STANDARDS

Hair Styles

Overall, hair should be clean, well-groomed, and neat. Avoid using an excessive amount of grooming aids (thus, it’s not permissible to grow your hair long and slick it back while in uniform). You may dye your hair if you wish, but it must look natural. Hair must not touch the eyebrows when groomed and may not protrude below the front band of properly worn headgear for males. For females, hair may be visible when headgear is properly worn.

Males. Men’s hairstyles must have a tapered appearance on both sides and back, both with and without headgear. A tapered appearance outlines the individual’s hair to conform to the shape of the head, curving inward to the termination point. The bulk or thickness of hair must not exceed 1¼ inches, regardless of length. The bulk may not exceed ¾ inch at the termination point. The hair must not touch the ears and only the closely cut or shaved hair on the back of the neck may touch the collar. A block cut is permissible as long as a
tapered appearance is maintained. Hair must not be worn in an extreme or faddish style, or in such a way that it exceeds length or bulk standards, or violates safety requirements. Males may not attach any visible foreign objects to their hair.

**Females.** Females’ hairstyles must present a professional appearance. Hair must be a minimum of one inch. The hair must not extend in length on all sides below an invisible line drawn parallel to the ground at the bottom edge of the shirt collar at the back of the neck. Hair must not exceed three inches in bulk or be styled in a way that prevents proper wear of headgear. When worn in a bun, all loose ends must be tucked in and secured. When worn in a ponytail, it must be pulled all the way through the elastic band and may hang naturally downward, not extending below the bottom of the collar. Hair color, highlights, and frostings will be a natural looking human hair color (for example: black, brunette, blonde, red and grey). It must not be worn in an extreme or faddish style, or in such a way that it violates safety requirements. Hair must not include ornamentation such as ribbons,
beads, scrunchies or jeweled pins. Plain and conservative elastic bands, pins, combs, and barrettes may be worn to keep hair in place, but they must match the individual’s hair color.

**Hair Nets.** Men and women may wear hair nets as required for safety. When worn, hair nets will be made of cotton or a synthetic material in a conservative, solid color similar to the individual’s hair color. Hair nets must be strong enough to support and control hair, and may not contain any metal fasteners.

**Wigs and Hairpieces.** These items must conform to the same standards required for natural hair. They must be of good quality and fit properly. They must not exceed limits stated for natural hair, and personnel engaged in aircraft flight line or in-flight operations may not wear them. Males desiring to wear a wig or hairpiece must have their medical records documented to wear a wig or hairpiece to cover baldness or disfigurement. Other male personnel are not authorized to wear a wig or hairpiece.

**Facial Hair (Males Only)**

**Mustaches.** When worn, mustaches must not extend downward beyond the lip line of the upper lip, or extend sideways beyond a vertical line drawn upward from the corner of the mouth. *Note: This doesn’t apply to individuals with shaving waivers—see next paragraph.*

**Beards.** Men may only wear beards for health reasons when authorized by a commander on the advice of a medical officer. If a waiver is authorized, facial hair will be kept trimmed so it doesn’t exceed \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch in length. Individuals granted a shaving waiver will not shave any facial hair. Commanders and supervisors must monitor progress in treatment to control these waivers.

**Sideburns.** When worn, sideburns must be neatly trimmed and tapered in the same manner as the haircut. They must be straight and of even width (i.e., not flared). They must end in a clean-shaven horizontal line. Sideburns must not extend below the lowest part of the exterior ear opening. *Note: This doesn’t apply to individuals with shaving waivers.*

**Cosmetics and Nail Polish (Females Only)**

Cosmetics and nail polish must be conservative and in good taste. Nails won’t contain any ornamentation and must be uniform in color. Shades that contrast with the complexion, detract from the uniform, or are extreme (for example, purple, gold, blue, black, red or fluorescent colors) will not be worn. Nails will not exceed \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch from fingertip. Cosmetics may not be worn in field conditions.

**Jewelry**

**Watch.** A watch, if worn, will be conservative (for example, solid color black, brown, silver or gold). Prohibited examples are diamond covered, neon, bright colors, and bands that exceed one-inch width.
**Rings.** A maximum of three rings can be worn. Wedding sets count as one ring when worn as a set. Thumb rings are not authorized.

**Bracelet.** Airmen may wear one bracelet around the wrist if it is conservative, presents a proper military image, is no wider than \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch, gold or silver in color, and doesn’t subject the wearer to potential injury. Bracelets espousing support for cause, philosophy, individual or group are not authorized. The only exception to this is the traditional metal POW/MIA/KIA bracelets.

**Earrings.** Women may wear small (not exceeding six millimeters in diameter), spherical, conservative diamond, gold, white pearl, silver, or spherical pierced or clip earrings with all uniforms unless safety considerations dictate otherwise. When worn, earrings will fit tightly against the ear and won’t extend below the earlobe. (The band connecting non-pierced earrings may extend slightly below the earlobe.) Only one earring or healing post may be worn on or in each lower earlobe. Male Airmen are not authorized to wear earrings on a military installation, or while in uniform or in civilian attire for official duty.

**Body Piercing.** Airmen may not wear any type of ornamentation in any pierced, exposed part of the body (except ears, as previously mentioned). This includes the tongue and any body part where the affixed ornamentation is visible through the uniform. This applies at any time the Airman is on a military installation, whether in- or out-of-uniform, on- or off-duty.

**Tattoos and Branding.** Tattoos, brands, and body markings anywhere on the body that are obscene, advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are prohibited in- and out-of-uniform. Excessive tattoos and brands will not be exposed or visible, including visible through the uniform, while wearing any uniform combination(s) except the physical training uniform. “Excessive” is defined as any tattoo or brand that exceeds \( \frac{1}{4} \) (25 percent) of the exposed body part and is readily visible when wearing any or all uniform combination(s). Any tattoo or brand above the collarbone, for example, on the neck, head, face, tongue, lips, and/or scalp, is prohibited.

**Eyeglasses, Sunglasses, and Contact Lenses.** Glasses or sunglasses may not be worn around the neck, exposed; hanging anywhere on the uniform; or on the top of the head. There may be conservative ornamentation on nonprescription sunglasses or eyeglasses. Frames may be black or brown material; gold or silver wire; and have a small same-color logo on the frame or lens. Conservative, clear, slightly-tinted, or photosensitive lenses are authorized. Conservative sunglasses and photosensitive-type eyeglasses may be worn while outdoors but may not be worn in formation (unless for medical reasons and when authorized by a commander or commandant on the advice of a medical official). Contact lenses will be natural looking in shape and design. They will be clear in color and not change the color of the Airman’s natural eye color.
**Undergarments**

Proper undergarments must be worn with all uniforms. Long-sleeved undershirts will not be worn with the short-sleeved uniform shirt or blouse. Undershirts will be tucked into trousers.

**Males.** Males will wear undershorts and white undershirts (either V-neck, crew-neck, or athletic style) with all service uniforms.

**Females.** Females will wear bra and underpants with all uniforms. Females may wear white undershirts (either V-neck, crew-neck or athletic style) with all service uniforms. Females may also wear other appropriate garments as necessary.

**Other Items**

**Attaché Cases, Backpacks, and Gym Bags.** Attaché cases, backpacks, and gym bags must be carried in the left hand, over the left shoulder, or on both shoulders and cannot interfere with saluting. Attaché cases will be solid-black in color. Small logos are authorized, however, the logo must be the same color.

When wearing ABUs, the backpack must be sage green, black, or in the ABU pattern. When wearing blue uniform combinations, back packs must be solid-black in color. Back packs will not have ornamentation.

Gym bags will be solid dark-blue or black in color with matching stitching. When wearing ABUs, Airmen can also use olive drab, Air Force sage green, or ABU-patterned gym bags. Small logos are authorized.

**Handbags.** For all uniform combinations, handbags must be solid black leather or vinyl without ornamentation and with black stitching only. They may have a plain fold-over flap and/or single placed solid silver or gold-colored clasp

**Handheld Electronic Devices.** (For example, cellular phones, MP3 or similar players, radio or hands-free devices). If worn on the belt or waistband, or clipped to a purse, handheld electronic device and holder or storage device will be plain black, silver, dark blue, or gray. If the device is not worn on the belt or waistband or clipped to a purse, it can be any color. While walking in uniform, use of personal electronic media devices, including ear pieces, speaker phones, or text messaging, is limited to emergencies or when official notifications are necessary. Military customs and courtesies take precedence.

**Umbrella.** Umbrellas will be plain, solid-colored black and carried in the left hand.

**Religious Apparel.** Airmen may request a waiver to permit wear of neat and conservative (defined as, discreet, tidy, and not dissonant or showy in style, size, design, brightness, or color) religious apparel. Items may not temporarily or permanently be affixed or appended to any authorized article of the uniform. Waivers may be submitted to the installation commander (or equivalent) through their chain of command as outlined in AFI
AIRMAN BATTLE UNIFORM (ABU)

This uniform is acceptable in all base offices and base establishments. Installation commanders may prescribe limits for wear based on mission requirements and the health and welfare of their people. Off-base, the ABU may be worn only for quick convenience stops and can’t be worn off-base for extended shopping, dining, socializing, or taking part in any entertainment (for example, the ABU can be worn to a grocery store to pick up a loaf of bread and a gallon of milk on the way home from work, but it can’t be worn to get a week’s worth of groceries at an off-base store). The ABU may be worn to eat lunch at a local establishment where people wear comparable civilian attire, but not where people wear business attire. The ABU will not be worn in establishments that have a primary function to sell and serve alcohol. Do not starch or hot press the ABU. Light ironing and center creasing of enlisted chevrons is authorized.

Headgear. All personnel must wear the ABU pattern patrol cap. Wear regular size cloth or subdued metal grade insignia centered above the visor. The cap is worn squarely on the head with no hair protruding in front of the cap. Exception: Certain career fields will wear their distinctive berets, for example, security forces, pararescue/combat rescue, SERE, combat control/special tactics, combat weather and TACP.

Coat. Wear the ABU coat outside the trousers at all times. Sleeves may be rolled up, but sleeves may not be shortened by cutting them. If rolled up, sleeves will touch or come within one inch of the forearm when the arm is bent at a 90-degree angle.

T-shirt. A desert sand (tan), short- or long-sleeved T-shirt will be worn under the ABU coat. Desert sand (tan) turtlenecks may be authorized. Members may wear desert sand, white, or cream colored thermal undergarments as weather conditions warrant.
**Trousers.** Trousers must be bloused over the combat boots. Tucking the ABU trouser into the boot is optional. Whether tucked in or bloused, the trouser must be evenly bloused (gathered in and draped loosely) over the top of the combat boot and must present a bloused appearance.

**Combat Boots.** Combat boots are the only footwear authorized for wear with the ABU. Boots are sage green, while desert tan boots are still authorized for those deployed to a desert location. Boots may or may not have a safety toe. They may have zipper or elastic inserts. Wear sage green socks over the white socks to preclude white socks from showing.

**Belt and buckle:** The desert sand riggers style belt must be worn. The tip of the belt may extend beyond the buckle.

**Accoutrements: Name Tapes and Badges.**

- Center the “US Air Force” tape immediately above the left breast pocket. Center the “Name” tape immediately above the right breast pocket. Tapes may be folded under at ends or cut off to match pocket width.

- Center regular size subdued cloth or subdued metal pin on grade insignia one inch from the edge of the collar and parallel to the edge of the collar.

- A maximum of four earned embroidered badges may be worn on the ABU. A maximum of two badges are worn on the left side centered ½ inch above “US Air Force” tape. Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace and missile operations badges are mandatory. All other badges are optional.

- When field items (body armor, helmet cover, molley gear and canteen covers) are not available in ABU pattern, the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) digital pattern can be worn.

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**PHYSICAL TRAINING UNIFORM**

All components making up the Physical Training Uniform and Improved Physical Training Uniform (PTU/IPTU) are considered uniform items. Wear is mandatory during physical fitness assessments (PFA) and while participating in organized physical training events as designated by the commander. The commander will also designate the PTU/IPTU uniform configuration. If PTU/IPTU items are worn during individual/personal physical training, the following guidelines apply as well:
• **Reflective Items.** Proper reflective items (belts, armbands, etc) are required during periods of low light conditions when wearing the optional running shorts as part of the PTU/IPTU. Reflective belts, armbands, etc are optional when wearing combinations of the standard issue PTU/IPTU items that contain reflective material on the top and bottom garments.

• **Athletic Style Shoes.** Athletic style shoes are mandatory. There are no color restrictions.

• **Socks.** Socks are mandatory. Socks will be white or black and may have a small trademark logo.

• **Jacket.** The jacket will be zipped at least halfway between the waistband and collar. Sleeves will end within one-inch of the wrist.

• **Running Pants.** The waistband will rest at or within two inches of the natural waistline. Both pant legs will extend below the ankles and will be zipped to within one inch of the bottom. *Do not mix/match the current PTU/IPTU running suit jacket and running suit pants. All other combinations authorized.*

• **Running Shorts.** Both the PTU running shorts (with reflective material) and optional IPTU running shorts (without reflective material), will have the waistband rest at or within two inches of the natural waistline. *The lining in the PTU shorts may be removed.*

• **Short-Sleeved Shirt.** The shirt-sleeved T-shirt will be tucked into shorts or running pants at all times. Do not push up, remove or cut sleeves.

• **Optional Long-Sleeved IPTU Shirt.** The long-sleeved T-shirt will be tucked into the PTU shorts or running pants at all times. Do not push up, remove, or cut sleeves.
• **Optional IPTU Sweatshirt.** The long-sleeved sweatshirt will extend no lower than six inches below the natural waist line. Do not push up, remove, or cut sleeves.

• **Undergarments.** Appropriate undergarments are required to be worn with all PTU combinations.

• **Spandex.** Both short- and full-length solid black or dark blue spandex may be worn and visible under both the PTU and optional running shorts.

• **Sport Caps.** Installation commanders may authorize wear of a solid black or dark blue baseball/sport cap with the Air Force symbol or US Air Force printed or embroidered on the front during organized PT; these are also authorized during individual PT. If authorized, caps to be worn outdoors only. Bandanas and other similar head-scarves/headgear are not authorized unless due to medical waiver condition. *Cold weather accessories may be worn outdoors only.*

• **Knit Watch Cap.** Caps will be plain, solid black, dark blue, or sage green without logos (bandanas and other similar head-scarves/headgear are not authorized unless due to medical waiver condition). *Cold weather accessories may be worn outdoors only.*

• **Gloves.** Gloves will be plain, solid black or dark blue without logos. *Cold weather accessories may be worn outdoors only.*

• **Scarf and Earmuffs.** Scarf and earmuffs will be solid black or dark blue. Earmuffs may wrap around either the top or rear of the head. *Cold weather accessories may be worn outdoors only.*

• **Headphones and Earphones.** Headphones and earphones are authorized while in the fitness center or on designated running areas unless prohibited by the installation commander.

• **Grooming Standards.** All personal grooming standards apply while participating in physical fitness activities with one exception: long female hair will be secured but may have loose ends; body art (tattoos) and jewelry standards apply.

• **Fleece Jacket.** The green or black fleece may not be worn with the PTU/IPTU.

• **Wear with Civilian Attire.** PTU/IPTU items are authorized for wear with conservative civilian/personal attire during individual/personal PT or while off-duty. No civilian/personal items with offensive wording, graphics or photos are to be worn with the PTU items at any time.
• **Customs and Courtesies.** Proper military customs and courtesies honoring the flag during reveille/retreat will apply (this means coming to full attention and rendering the proper military salute when outdoors). Saluting due to rank recognition is not required when wearing the PTU.

**Exceptions:**

• For accessions, professional military education, and academic training environments (e.g. USAFA, ROTC, OTS, SOS, BMT), commanders (or equivalent) will determine which physical training events are organized. In these environments, students and staff may wear unit-specific PT gear to meet necessary training requirements (e.g. Staff/student distinction, student squadron affiliation, etc.).

• Wear policy for the PTU in a deployed environment can be further defined by the Air Force Forces commander specific to that area of responsibility (AOR).
PART II

You have already read in *Air Force Dress and Appearance: Part I* that as an Air Force officer, you must display the qualities of a leader. You set the example in your dress and grooming which reflect pride in yourself, your profession, your unit and the Air Force. You should always strive to exceed the minimum standard in all things that you do, especially in dress and grooming! Remember, an Air Force officer is always on display, in front of the troops and to the general public!

The previous reading dealt with Personal Grooming Standards and wear of the Airman Battle Uniform (ABU) and Physical Training Uniform/Improved Physical Training Uniform (PTU/IPTU). This reading will begin where that reading left off, and focus on the blue Service Uniform, Dress Uniform, and Mess Dress Uniform.

**Terms Explained**

As used here, these terms mean the following:

- **Right or Left.** The wearer's right or left.
- **Installation Commander.** The person who is responsible for and controls the personnel, facilities, equipment, and real estate constituting an Air Force base, station, operating location, etc.
- **On-Duty.** The hours a person is actually at work, as required by assignment.
- **Mandatory Uniform.** A complete uniform combination of selected items from Airmen's mandatory clothing.
- **Mandatory Clothing Items.** Uniform clothing items each Airman must always have, according to AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of the Air Force Personnel.
- **Optional Clothing Items.** A uniform clothing item, other than a mandatory clothing item, approved for wear by all Air Force personnel.
- **Accoutrements.** Medals, ribbons, insignia, badges, emblems, tags, scarves, gloves, etc., authorized for wear on or with any uniform.
- **Service Uniforms.** All authorized blue uniform combinations.
- **Gig Line.** When the blue uniform shirt is tucked into the skirt, trousers, or slacks, the front fly opening, the button front edge of the shirt, the outside edge of the belt buckle (when required), and the edge of the fly all must be aligned. This alignment creates a gig line. The gig line is to be straight and neat.
SERVICE UNIFORM

Headgear

With all service uniform combinations, the following hats may be worn:

- **Service Cap.** The service cap is mandatory to maintain for those in the rank of major and above and optional for captain and below. Wear it squarely on the head, with no hair showing in the front. For major and above, the front of the hat will be decorated with clouds and lightning bolts; it's plain for all other officers. All officers will wear the large size insignia (eagle) centered on the front of the hat.

- **Flight Cap.** The flight cap is a mandatory item. This hat is worn slightly to the wearer's right with the vertical crease of the cap in line with the center of the forehead, in a straight line with the nose. The bottom of the cap is approximately one inch from the eyebrows in the front. Women may have hair showing in front of the flight cap. Officers will wear the flight cap with silver braided trim. When not worn, the flight cap may be tucked under the belt on either side, between the first and second belt loops. It may protrude above the top edge of the belt as long as it does not fold.

Service Trousers/Slacks

Wear these dark blue pants with the bottom front resting on the front of the shoe/boot with a slight break in the crease. The back of the trousers' legs will be approximately ¾ inch longer than the front. These may be worn with any of the service uniform combinations. For males, a dark blue belt with silver tip and buckle must be worn. The silver tip end of the belt must extend beyond the buckle facing the wearer’s left, with no blue fabric showing. For females wearing the slacks with belt loops, they must wear the same dark blue belt as the men, but the silver tip end of the belt must extend beyond the buckle facing the wearer’s right, with no blue fabric showing.

Service Skirt (Females Only)

The dark blue skirt can be found with or without belt loops. The hem of the skirt may be no shorter than the top of the kneecap and no longer than the bottom of the kneecap. When the skirt with belt loops is worn, a dark blue belt with silver tip and buckle must be worn. The silver tip end of the belt must extend beyond the buckle facing the wearer’s right, with no blue fabric showing. The skirt may be worn with any of the service uniform combinations.
Footwear

- Footwear should always be shined and in good repair.
- With the service trousers/slacks, the low quarters, oxfords with low wedge heel, black combat boots, or black dress boots may be worn. When the low quarters are worn, males must wear plain black socks. Females may wear plain black socks or hose (see below for description of hose allowed). With the boots, plain black or white socks can be worn.
- Females may choose to wear plain black pumps (high-heeled shoes) with the service slacks. The pumps must have no design. The heel must be of a height suitable to the individual, but no higher than 2½ inches. Platform shoes or extra thick soles aren’t allowed. When the pumps are worn, women must wear hose. Hose will be neutral, dark brown, black, off black, or dark blue in a shade that complements the uniform and skin tone. No patterned hose will be worn. Female Airmen will remove leg hair that is visibly protruding beyond the appropriate hosiery or causes a visibly uneven texture under hosiery.
- With the service skirt, women may wear the low quarters, dress boots, or pumps. Regardless of the shoe chosen, women must wear hose with the skirt. (See previous paragraph for restrictions on the pumps and hose.) Note: It’s much more professional looking to wear the pumps rather than the low quarters with the skirt. Women may also opt to wear dress boots with the skirt, but these must be removed and oxfords or pumps worn in the member’s work place. Boots may not have extra thick or platform soles. Heel height of the boot may not exceed 2½ inches.

Men’s Long-Sleeved Blue Shirt

Wear this shirt tucked into the service pants. Sleeves may not be rolled up. The gig line is to be straight and neat.

- **Rank Insignia.** Rank insignia is mandatory. Officers will wear shoulder mark insignia as close as possible to the shoulder seam.
- **Name Tag.** The name tag is mandatory. The name tag will rest on, but not over, the top edge of the right pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket.
• **Ribbons.** Wear all or none. If worn, ribbons rest on, but not over, the top edge of the left pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket. *Ribbons are optional for officers and are not customarily worn.*

• **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory; all others are optional. The total number of badges worn will not exceed four. The first badge will be centered on the wearer’s left ½ inch above the top row of ribbons or pocket if not wearing ribbons. Center additional badge ½ inch above the first one. See AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, for placement of other badges.

• **Tie.** Wear of the tie is mandatory. The tip of the tie will be no more than 1½ inches above or 1½ inches below the top of the belt buckle.

• **Tie Tack/Bar.** The tie tack/bar is optional. It may be of the Air Force crest of arms, star and wing design, or the individual’s rank insignia type. The tie tack/bar may be satin finish or highly polished. When worn, center the tie tack/bar between the bottom edge of the knot and the bottom tip of the tie.

• *The finish of all accoutrements must match.*

**Women’s Long-Sleeved Blue Shirt**

The women’s long-sleeved blue shirt comes in two versions, the tuck-in style and the semi-form fitting style. The tie tab is mandatory at all times with both styles.

• **Semi-Form Fitting Shirt.** This shirt can be worn tucked in or left out of either the service slacks or skirts. Place accoutrements as indicated below and in AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*.

  - **Rank Insignia.** Rank insignia is mandatory. Officers will wear shoulder mark insignia as close as possible to the shoulder seam.

  - **Name Tag.** The name tag is mandatory. Center the name tag on the right side between the buttons and the arm seam. The name tag is worn even with-, to 1½ inches higher or lower than-, the first exposed button and horizontal to the ground.
- **Ribbons.** Wear all or none. If worn, ribbons must be in the proper sequence. The bottom of the ribbons will be even with the bottom of the name tag. *Ribbons are optional for officers and are not customarily worn.*

- **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory; all others are optional. The total number of badges worn will not exceed four. The first badge will be centered on the wearer’s left ½ inch above the top row of ribbons. If no ribbons are worn, the first badge will be centered and parallel to the name tag. Center additional badge ½ inch above the first one. See AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel,* for placement of other badges.

- **Tuck-In Style Shirt.** This shirt must be tucked into the service slacks and skirts. The gig line is to be straight and neat. Place accoutrements as indicated above and in AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel.*

- **The finish of all accoutrements must match.**

**Men’s Short-Sleeved Blue Shirt**

Always wear this shirt tucked in to the service trousers. The gig line is to be straight and neat.

- **Rank Insignia.** Rank insignia is mandatory. Officers will wear shoulder mark insignia as close as possible to the shoulder seam.

- **Name Tag.** The name tag is mandatory. It rests on, but not over the top, edge of the right pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket.

- **Ribbons.** Wear all or none. If worn, ribbons rest on, but not over, the top edge of the left pocket, centered between the edges of the pocket. *Ribbons are optional for officers and are not customarily worn.*

- **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory; all others are optional. The total number of badges worn will not exceed four. The first badge will be centered on the wearer’s left ½ inch above the top row of ribbons or pocket if
not wearing ribbons. Center additional badge ½ inch above the first one. See AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, for placement of other badges.

- **Tie.** The tie is optional. If worn, the tip of the tie will be no more than 1½ inches above, nor 1½ inches below, the top of the belt buckle.

- **Tie Tack/Bar.** The tie tack/bar is optional. It may be of the Air Force crest of arms, star and wing design, or the individual's rank insignia type. The tie tack/bar may be satin finish or highly polished. When worn, center the tie tack/bar between the bottom edge of the knot and the bottom tip of the tie.

- *The finish of all accoutrements must match.*

**Women’s Short-Sleeved Blue Shirt**

The women's short-sleeved blue shirt comes in two versions, the tuck-in style and the semi-form-fitting style.

- **Semi-Form-Fitting Shirt.** With this style you have the option of wearing the tie tab or leaving it off. The blouse can be worn tucked in or left out of either the service slacks or skirt. Place accoutrements as indicated below and in AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*.

  - **Rank Insignia.** Rank insignia is mandatory. Officers will wear shoulder mark insignia as close as possible to the shoulder seam.

  - **Name Tag.** The name tag is mandatory. Center on the right side between the buttons and the arm seam. Worn even with to 1-1/2 inches higher or lower than the first exposed button and horizontal to the ground.

  - **Ribbons.** Wear all or none. Center ribbons on the left side between the buttons and the arm seam. The bottom of the ribbons will be even with the bottom of the name tag. *Ribbons are optional for officers and are not customarily worn.*

  - **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory; all others are optional. The total number of badges worn will not exceed four. The first badge will be centered on the wearer’s left 1/2 inch above the top row of ribbons. If no ribbons are worn, the first badge will be
centered and parallel to the name tag. Center additional badge 1/2 inch above the first one. See AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, for placement of other badges.

- **Tuck-In Style Shirt.** This shirt must be tucked into the service slacks and skirts. The gig line is to be straight and neat. Place accoutrements as indicated above and in AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*.

- **The finish of all accoutrements must match.**

**Shoulder Mark Insignias**

Officers wear shoulder mark insignia on all light blue shirts and on the blue pullover sweater. The rank insignia is sewn on to the shoulder mark, which slides onto the shirt or sweater epaulet. Contrary to popular belief, these don’t come in “male and female” sizes; they come in large and small sizes. Choose the size that best fits you. Place the shoulder mark insignia as close as possible to the shoulder seam.

Company Grade Officers: Company grade officers include second lieutenants, first lieutenants, and captains. The shoulder marks are solid blue with the appropriate rank sewn 5/8 inch from the edge.

**Field Grade Officers.** Field grade officers include majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels. The shoulder marks are solid blue, with a narrow silver stripe nearest the shoulder seam end.

**General Officers.** This is anyone who wears stars! Shoulder marks for general officers have a wide silver stripe nearest the shoulder seam end and a narrow silver stripe near the neck.

**Other Garments**

In this section, we’ll discuss four of the many other authorized garments. You may wear these garments with any of the light blue shirt/blouse combinations. In addition, you may wear the all-weather coat with the service dress uniform and the ABU uniform.
Blue Pullover and Cardigan Sweater. Both sweaters can only be worn with the service uniform. This is an indoor and outdoor garment. It may be worn without a tie or tab and the shirt collar may be worn in or outside the sweater. The sleeves won’t be worn pushed up. The sweater can be worn under the all-weather coat or the gabardine lightweight blue jacket. Wear the shoulder mark insignia on the epaulets of the sweater.

Lightweight Blue Jacket. The lightweight blue jacket can only be worn with the service uniform and must be zipped at least halfway. It may be worn over the pullover sweater, but the sweater can’t extend below the bottom of the jacket. Females are authorized to wear the male version of the jacket.

Males and females wear the regular size metal grade insignia on the epaulets. The rank is centered on the epaulet ⅜ inches from the shoulder seam. Enlisted personnel will wear chevron rank.

All-Purpose Environmental Clothing System (APECS). The APECS can only be worn with the ABU, flight duty, and chef white uniforms. The APECS will have slip-on rank that will be worn on the rank tab and be zipped no lower than mid-point on the rank tab at all times when worn. The APECs is for outdoor use only and is not to be worn inside.

Sage Green Fleece. The sage green fleece is authorized for wear as an outer garment with the ABU only. It can be worn over the ABU coat. Is not authorized to be worn solely over a T-shirt, thermal underwear, etc. The fleece will have a Velcro ABU print last name tape with dark blue block lettering centered between the zipper and sleeve seam on the wearer’s right chest. It will also have a two-inch squared Velcro subdued cloth rank with a solid sage green background flushed and centered above the last name tape on the wearer’s right chest. A Velcro ABU print US Air Force tape with dark blue, block lettering will be even with the last name tape and centered between the zipper and sleeve seam on the wearer’s left chest. The sage green fleece will be zipped no lower than the top of the name tape. The collar will be folded over and resting on the shoulder, chest, and back when the zipper is not completely zipped. The fleece is for outdoor use only and is not to be worn inside.
SERVICE DRESS UNIFORM

Males: Officer and Enlisted

- **Coat and Trousers.** The coat will match the trousers.

- **Tie.** A tie will be worn. The tie will be the polyester herringbone twill.

- **Tie Tack/Clasp.** The tie tack/clasp is optional. When it is worn it will be the old shiny finish or new wing and star design.

- **Headgear.** The flight cap will be worn and it will match. The service cap can also be worn. The service cap is mandatory for all officers in the rank of major and above maintain a service cap. The service cap is optional for all other ranks.

- **Rank Insignia.** Officers will center regular size metal grade insignia centered 5/8-inch from the end of the epaulet. Enlisted members will wear the four-inch chevrons.

- **Blue Sleeve Braid.** Colonels and below must wear a half-inch blue braid three inches from the end of the sleeve on the service coat.

- **Rank Insignia on Light Blue Short- or Long-Sleeve Shirt.** Rank will be worn on the light blue short- or long-sleeve shirt worn underneath the coat. Officers will wear shoulder mark insignia. Enlisted members may wear the three or 3½-inch chevrons.

- **US Insignia.** Officers wear the highly polished US insignia without the circle. Align the bottom of the insignia halfway up the seam of the collar, resting on but not over, and horizontal to the ground.

- **Cuff Links.** Cuff links are optional. When worn, they can be either the old shiny finish or new wing and star design. The tie tack/clasp and cuff links must match.

- **Name Tag.** The name tag is mandatory. It is worn on the wearer’s right side of the service dress jacket even with the bottom of the ribbons. It should be centered between the sleeve seam and the lapel.
- **Ribbons.** Wear all ribbons awarded. Ribbons must be in proper sequence and centered immediately above the pocket Welt.

- **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory; all others are optional. The total number of badges worn will not exceed four. The first badge will be centered on the wearer’s left ½ inch above the top row of ribbons. Center additional badge ½ inch above the first. Wear polished badges only. See AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, for placement of other badges.

- *The finish of all accoutrements must match.*

**Females: Officer and Enlisted**

- **Coat and Trousers.** The coat will match the trousers or skirt—both are authorized for females.

- **Tie.** A tie tab will be worn.

- **Headgear.** The flight cap will be worn and it will match. The service cap can also be worn. *The service cap is mandatory for all officers in the rank of major and above maintain a service cap. The service cap is optional for all other ranks.*

- **Rank Insignia.** Officers will center regular size metal grade insignia centered ⅝-inch from the end of the epauletp. Enlisted members will wear chevrons.

- **Blue Sleeve Braid.** Colonels and below must wear a half-inch blue braid three inches from the end of the sleeve on the service coat

- **Rank Insignia on Light Blue Short- or Long-Sleeve Shirt.** Rank will be worn on the light blue short- or long-sleeve shirt worn underneath the coat. Officers will wear shoulder mark insignia. Enlisted members may wear the three or 3½-inch chevrons.

- **US Insignia.** Officers wear the highly polished US insignia without the circle. Align the bottom of the insignia halfway up the seam of the collar, resting on but not over, and horizontal to the ground.
• **Name Tag.** The name tag is mandatory. It is worn on the wearer's right side of the service dress jacket even with the bottom of the ribbons. It should be centered between the sleeve seam and the lapel.

• **Ribbons.** Wear *all* ribbons awarded. Ribbons must be in proper sequence and centered immediately above the pocket welt.

• **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory; all others are optional. The total number of badges worn will not exceed four. The first badge will be centered on the wearer’s left $\frac{1}{2}$ inch above the top row of ribbons. Center additional badge $\frac{1}{2}$ inch above the first. Wear polished badges only. See AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, for placement of other badges.

• *The finish of all accoutrements must match.*

### MESS DRESS UNIFORM

**Male Mess Dress Uniform**

This is a mandatory uniform item for all officers. Its civilian equivalent is the tuxedo. You should carefully review AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, for the specifics on the proper wear of this uniform. The mess dress is a dark blue uniform, with silver braid on the sleeves and a dark blue stripe along the sides of the trousers.

• **Shirt.** The shirt will be a conventional white, soft dress-type shirt with turn down collar and French cuffs.

• **Bow Tie.** The blue-satin bow tie is mandatory.

• **Footwear.** Plain toe, black, also known as low quarters, without perforations or other design will be worn. Wear plain black socks.

• **Cummerbund.** The cummerbund will be plain blue-satin, worn half way between the shirt and trousers, with the open edge of the pleats facing upward.
• **Cuff Links.** Cuff links are mandatory with the mess dress uniform. They will either be silver, satin finish or highly polished with the “wing and star” design; silver, highly polished with the Air Force symbol; or plain silver, highly polished, commercial design with dimensions and shape similar to the “wing and star” cuff links.

• **Studs.** Studs are mandatory and can be either pearl centered, silver rimmed, highly polished, satin finished or plain silver, highly polished, commercial design with dimensions and shape similar to the pearl centered studs. The finish must match cuff links.

• **Suspenders.** Suspenders are mandatory and will be either solid white, dark blue or black and will be attached to the trousers and will not be visible.

• **Accoutrements.** All items are mandatory unless otherwise stated.
  - **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory. Center badge ½ inch above top row of medals or when not authorized medals, midway between shoulder and top button. Wear second badge centered ½ inch above first badge, when authorized.
  - **Medals.** Wear the miniature medals, centered on the wearer’s left between lapel and arm seam, and midway between top shoulder seam and top button of the jacket.
  - **Rank Insignia.** Place shoulder boards as close as possible to the shoulder seam. *Mess dress shoulder boards are not the same as the ones worn on the blue service uniform.*

**Female Mess Dress Uniform**

Mess dress is a mandatory uniform item for all officers. Its civilian equivalent is the evening gown. You should carefully review AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, for the specifics on the proper wear of this uniform. The mess dress is a dark blue uniform. The jacket gaps approximately two-to-three at the bottom, and has silver braid on the sleeves. There are two styles of skirt available: the A-line or the straight skirt with split seam.

• **Blouse.** This is a conventional white soft dress-type shirt with turn down collar and French cuffs.

• **Tie Tab.** The blue satin inverted-V tie tab with self-fastening tails is mandatory.
• **Cuff Links and Studs.** Cuff links are optional with the mess dress uniform. They will either be silver, satin finish or highly polished with the “wing and star” design; silver, highly polished with the Air Force symbol; or plain silver, highly polished, commercial design with dimensions and shape similar to the “wing and star” cuff links.

• **Cummerbund.** The cummerbund will be plain blue satin and worn halfway between the shirt and skirt with open edge of pleat facing upward. Cummerbunds will be without design.

• **Footwear.** Black pumps, either patent or high-gloss finish, are authorized. Heels must be of a height suitable to the individual, but no higher than 2½ inches nor lower than one inch. The shoes must not have any ornamentation, like bows, buckles, or straps.

• **Handbag.** Carry a clutch style handbag, of plain commercial design. The handbag may be fabric or patent leather.

• **Hose.** Wear sheer, nylon, neutral, dark blue, or black/off-black hose. Patterned hose are prohibited.

• **Accoutrements.** All items are mandatory unless otherwise stated.
  
  − **Badges.** Chaplain, aeronautical, space, cyberspace, and missile operations badges are mandatory. Center badge ½ inch above top row of medals or when not authorized medals, midway between shoulder and top button. Wear second badge centered ½ inch above first badge, when authorized.

  − **Medals.** Wear the miniature medals, centered on the wearer’s left between lapel and arm seam, and midway between top shoulder seam and top button of the jacket.

  − **Rank Insignia.** Place shoulder boards as close as possible to the shoulder seam. *Mess dress shoulder boards are not the same as the ones worn on the blue service uniform.*

**UNAUTHORIZED WEAR OF UNIFORMS AND INSIGNIA**

Airmen will not wear the uniform or any part of the uniform in the following circumstances:

• At a meeting of, or sponsored by, an organization, association, movement, or group that the Attorney General has named as totalitarian, fascist, communist, or subversive, advocates or approves acts of force or violence to deny others their rights, or seeks to change the United States government by unconstitutional means.
• When participating in activities such as public speeches, interviews, picket lines, marches, or rallies, or in any public demonstration not approved by the Air Force.

• When furthering political activities, private employment, or commercial interests.

• When engaged in an off-duty civilian capacity.

• When it would discredit the Armed Forces.

• At any public meeting, demonstration, march, rally, or interview if the purpose may be to advocate, express, or approve opposition to the Armed Forces of the United States.

• Airmen will not wear or mix distinctive uniform items with civilian clothes, for example, rank insignia, cap devices, badges, and other US or Air Force insignia, devices, buttons, etc.

Bibliography: