

ADVICE COMPILED FROM SEVERAL YEARS OF LISTENING

From a former Doolie Parent to another (January 2006)

Disclaimer: Not all this advice will work for you. Given your cadet and your situation, you judge if this information is worth following. Also, everything at USAFA is subject to change. What worked last year may not be in use this year. Nothing I present is official—only the US Air Force Academy makes things official and required. Check the parent's website at www.setxafapa.org for current information and links to other important sites.

PART ONE: BEFORE YOUR CADET LEAVES....

1. Important for your Cadet:

Get in the best Physical shape possible. Not the time to slack off. Especially work on the upper body strength. Get to doing 100 push-ups a day. Run. Run. Run. Work out to the guidelines of the PFT (Physical Fitness Test) listed in the handbooks.

Break in the boots. Get them comfortable long before leaving for BCT. Wear them everywhere. One suggestion is to soak them overnight, put on heavy socks, and then wear the boots until dry and walk/run at least 10 miles in them before going to USAFA. Suggestion: Get a head start and have an expert teach how to shine the boots military-style, but know the cadets are taught at the Academy how to shine boots.

Start early filling out the required paperwork! Follow the instructions in the Appointee book regarding the required paperwork. **Make copies** and keep some copies at home. Order extra copies of the state-sealed official birth certificate (as the information will be needed time and again). Secure in a clasp envelope (the cadet will feel empowered at In-Processing knowing everything is in one location).

Get and learn to use an electric rechargeable razor (for the men) before going to the Academy.

Get their hair cut now and get used to it. Especially for the men to get a starter tan on their shaved heads and for the women to figure out to style hair in no time.

Keep a private e-mail account separate from his/her Academy official e-mail account and give only the private account address out (A cadet is responsible for anything sent to the USAFA account, even if the e-mailbox is full).

Read the section on "How to Survive" in the book Air Force Academy Candidate Book By William L. Smallwood.

Get a current passport—costs \$97 plus needed passport photos which are harder to get at the Academy with limited transportation. A military one will be issued, too, but sometimes cadets don't want to be id-ed as military when traveling overseas, and a regular passport is needed for pleasure travel.

Drink lots of water starting the week before coming to In-Processing to help with adjusting to the higher altitude.

Write a letter to him/herself on why the cadet wants to attend the Academy and where the cadet's strengths are and what the life goals are. This letter will come in handy should the cadet get self-doubts.

2. Your Cadet's Personal Belongings

Follow the directions in the Appointee Handbook about what the cadets can bring/not bring with them to the Academy. Then label the valuable items (watch, calculator, etc) with initials and social security #. Bring about 9 days of clean, throwaway-later underwear (white is better because of inspections). 9 days of sports bras for women.

Cadets can bring own toiletries to BCT, so pack deodorant, feminine/masculine hygiene products, shampoo & conditioner (2 in 1 is better), razor, sunscreen...

Prep a small-size address book with friends & relatives addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers. Include extra stamps and small envelopes, paper & pens. You might even pre-address a few envelopes for home before leaving.

Prep a wallet or purse expunged of most items. The driver's license (which will be replaced with a DofD ID but still needed for other uses), watches, money and credit cards, etc won't be seen again until August. These items are put in a bag and then stored until then. Make a Xerox copy of the wallet's contents and give a copy to your cadet and keep one for yourself. Keep the "good stuff" or extra credit cards at home and either ship after Acceptance Day (about August 5th) or bring at Parents' Weekend. You can't send packages during BCT.

Hint: Prep a small zippered binder to keep with the cadet during BCT

Often Bibles and Day planners have zippers and small pockets. The BCT cadre may not take these away or even look into them. Put in mole-skin and band aids, (never enough blister aids in BCT!!!) ache-relief medicines, mailing addresses of close friends and family, small amount of money, letter-paper, SASE envelopes or stamped postcards back to the family and friends, a small phone card, and notes of encouragement.

Start a "Box of Possibilities" at home. My cadet put things in a suitcase she thought she might want (certain textbooks, clothes, photos, casual clothing, hair products, etc) in a suitcase which I brought out with me at Parents Weekend. Then she "shopped" through it and took what she wanted and I returned the rest to the house.

Know what your cadet will wear for In-Processing, so you can spot him/her if you attend or when you look through In-Processing photos posted on the AOG and USAFA websites.

3. With your Cadet:

Take your cadet underwear shopping and store it. Think Sportswear type articles. Several with bicycle-length shorts. Send about a week's worth right after BCTII, as most cadets throw away their disgusting clothing. Send the remaining amount sometime in September. Get medicine for upper thigh chaffing to take to BCT.

Teach your cadet how to do laundry, iron, clean rooms, and make beds (if you know the military way, but don't sweat it if you don't; the Cadets will be taught).

Work out ways to handle stress positively and draw up small steps to achieve over short periods of time (Get thru first day, get thru first week, get thru BCTI, get thru BCTII, get thru Acceptance day, get to Parents Weekend, etc).

Get your cadet to record the message on the answering machine so you can hear the voice when you feel lonely.

Learn to do Instant Messaging (IM) with your cadet and have a joint account set up ahead of leaving.

Figure which calling plan will work best for your family and know that no matter where your cadet is at the Academy, the reception is poor.

Work out with your cadet what you will wave, should you go to In-Processing and/or Acceptance (such as a balloon, poster, colorful hat, beach towel to hang over the chapel wall, etc).

Encourage your Cadet to have fun spending time with family, friends, siblings, pets, etc and go with a good, relaxed attitude these last few weeks.

Let your Cadet know s/he fall under the Military Code of Justice. They can be court-martialed, etc. if they mess up while attending the Academy and even before commitment papers are signed prior to their 2-degree year, because they still would fall under the military laws and not civilian laws. Pl reinforce each time your cadet comes home ON LEAVE and goes out with friends from “regular colleges”.

Give your Cadet the Parental Lecture of being careful about whom s/he chooses to be friends with (peer pressure will be the greatest during the Academy years), unwise sexual behavior, underage & binge drinking (most of any young person’s problems stem from this), and the horrible impact of poor choices. You won’t be sorry you did.

And remember to tell how proud you are, too.

Comments about Grades

Remind your cadet while s/he were easily at the top of the class in high school, so were the other 4000 USAFA cadets. Set attainable goals and excel where the cadet can. As one parent wrote, getting a “C” in a class is not the end of the world. “C” stands for the “Chance” to “Continue” with the Academy. Some colleges take the Academy grades and raise them as much as a full 1.0 should a cadet transfer. No matter how smart everyone is, most Academy profs are suppose to have a 2.7 B- class average, even when the class has lots of smart people.

(For my cadet, I spoke with her on the importance of Networking. Excellent grades got her into the Academy. Now if she has to choose between studying for a higher grade or to be with people she will be rubbing shoulders with later in her career, opt for the people time—that is our suggestion; yours may be different)

As the joke goes: What is the bottom person academically called upon graduation? Answer: Second Lieutenant. Do impress that grades and military conduct are important at the Academy, because choice of assignments are meted out based on class ranks. Getting a “slacker” reputation is not a good move.

Note: You might be seeing personality changes in your cadet, as s/he start to severe ties with the home and redirect attention to the next phase of life. Some parents swear their cadets make things so difficult that the parents are almost relieved they are leaving. It is just the immaturity of not knowing how to say thanks and goodbye. Give your cadet some leeway. This is more noticeable when the cadets come home during breaks from the Academy.

4. For the Parents:

Make your Parents Weekend plans NOW! (get hotel room, and car rental and air, if flying in. Some people start arriving Wednesday before the rush and most fly in on Thursday. Your cadet reports back sometime on Monday and usually needs several hours to do work, so think about leaving your cadet mid-day Monday).

Join your area Parents Club and participate. Read past newsletters and get familiar with the club’s website.

Plan to attend the Military Ball if your cadet wants to go.

Join FamNet (take the advice with an attitude of “if it fits my cadet” and learn which writers you can trust—too bad too many rumors get started on this so don’t believe everything and don’t get involved with the nasty side of FamNet).

Join FamNet’s Appointee listserv for great advice.

Bookmark on your computer the USAFA and the AOG websites.

Learn to navigate the USAFA and AOG and your Parents Club’s webpages (a lot of your questions can be answered on line).

Get yourself a powerful pair of binoculars to take with you every time to the Academy

Get a fast line for your computer for searching for photos on the various webpages of the Academy cadets.

Get and learn to use a digital camera and to send photos over the internet.

Start collecting things for a scrapbook or memory box.

Start a file for USAFA contacts as you learn your Cadet's officers, roommates, Sponsor, instructors, families of classmates, etc. You will refer to this list quite often.

Attend the Appointees' Send-off information party hosted by the Parents Club and meet people who will cross your paths often for the next several years. Keep lists of names. One darling woman even took photos of everyone, from Appointee meetings through every Parents Weekend and then sent copies to the families—this way she learned names, addresses and could match with faces from all over the US.

5. Financial Matters involving your Cadet

Figure an easy way to send money to your cadet, such as keeping a local bank account, so you can easily deposit money and s/he can withdraw with an ATM-type credit card or use a cash-advance type credit card (from time to time, a need for emergency money does arrive).

Open a Colorado local bank account for your cadet, since leaving the Academy grounds the first year is limited and often only local checks are accepted. List a parent on the Colorado bank account (which means the parents' SS#, date of birth is needed).

See that the cadet can balance a checkbook and keep up with credit card expenses.

Give your cadet the lecture of the easy lure and dangers of credit card debt.

See that the cadet is working on a savings plan, as the Class Ring + Dance and Graduation, and even books+ class materials can be very expensive.

Think about having a "joint" credit card for use in emergencies only.

Review your Auto Insurance in regards to your cadet. Will s/he be covered if driving your car? A Fellow cadet's car? You might need to purchase Non-owner car insurance through your insurance or through USAA insurance.

Sign up for Personal Property Insurance, either through your policy or thru USAA (which will have a booth at sign-in and costs approx \$50 /year with the bill sent to you).

Some parents keep their cadets on their dental plans to insure they will get twice-a-year cleanings. Make the appointments now to coincide with breaks. Proof of Enrollment papers to stay on the Insurance plans can be made by calling the Academy with the social security number.

Careful: Have a **Back-up Plan** should your Cadet be Out-Processed (voluntary or non-voluntary). Dozens of Basic Cadets leave the Academy before the start of the academic year. Some suffer an injury during BCT and are medically out-processed and others voluntarily decide to go home. Those cadets with medical turn-backs can choose to return to USAFA in next year's class. Each incoming class normally has 5-10 basics who were injured during the previous summer. Parents who have maintained their health/medical insurance coverage for their cadet will have more treatment options for injuries and don't have to worry about re-applying to restore the child's health coverage. Some cadets who out-process decide to attend their second choice college (if they can still get in or never turned down their acceptance). Taking all the AP tests helps in this case, too. Then there are those cadets who are disenrolled. Sadly, the out-processed cadet needs to make own arrangements home, too. The point being: think about medical care and what do to come the start of the Academic year for those not at the Academy anymore.

6. Mail for your Cadet

Receiving Mail ranks up there with food, water, and sleep to a BCT cadet.

You can get the PO Box number from the back of the Appointee book

The Proper Address prior to Acceptance is Basic Cadet <First> <Last>

After Acceptance, drop the “Basic” and address how ever you want.

Write your cadet before sending him/her off so your cadet can have a letter waiting.

Mail is slow during BCT, sometimes 5-10 days between mailing and receipt.

If you can find out your cadet’s BCT squadron and flight element, add that to the address to speed up getting mail during BCT

During BCT, use only white envelopes, black lettering, a simple stamp, and no other markings, as this will cause your cadet to be spotlighted and do extra pushups.

Be careful what is written on Postcards, as they will be read aloud.

Do NOT send contraband items (music, candy, photos). Do not encourage your Cadet to break any rules. Uphold the Honor Code.

No packages to Basics are permitted. So plan to send an Acceptance Package to arrive the day or two before Acceptance—mark all over it “Open on Acceptance Day” and you can drop the word “Basic” and address your cadet as “Cadet <First & Last Name> or whatever you choose for the rest of your cadet’s time at the Academy. The Acceptance Package should include the clean underwear, some civilian clothes, the good stuff such as favorite rings, watches, photos, cameras, gameboys (if permitted for doolies), etc. Include some sweets, fun stuff, and things to share.

Encourage others to get lots of mail for your cadet

Post his/her address in your church bulletin, school directory, club lists, sports clubs, etc.

Carry stamped envelopes with your cadet’s address and hand out to anyone asks about your cadet.

Hand out business-type cards that include the proper mailing info and the non-Academy e-mail address of your cadet.

Create a group e-mailing list of your cadet’s biggest supporters (divided into two groups: friends and adults) and send out periodic updates and include a plea to write and reposting of the mailing address. Make sure you have a translation of these e-mail addresses with names. Encourage them to share their letters with you.

Put your extended family on a “mailing schedule” to make sure everyone writes several times during BCT and during the first year

Write every day during BCT and make sure the letters are worth 10 pushups. Include funny things, comic strips, inspirational messages, scanned photos on computer paper, news about town and the family and friends, very short brain-teasers...

Scan photos on printer paper and write below the photos.

Get yourself a rubberstamp with your cadet’s name and mailing address—this will speed giving out the address or addressing envelopes.

After Acceptance, think about sending monthly or bi-monthly CARE packages. Use shoe-boxes or US Postal Service boxes and fill them up with candy, cookies, breads, silly items, school items, Sunday comics, etc—and send plenty to share.

Using the US Postal Service for packages is easier for the Cadets, as they can pick up at Vandy Hall. Fed-Ex and UPS boxes have to be picked up at Arnold Hall and cadets are charged a few dollars for a handling fee. The physical address needed for Fed-Ex and UPS is: Your Cadet’s Name and Class Year/ 2302 Cadet Drive/USAFA CO 80840. Some parents slip in the handling fee in the top of the box to pay upon pick-up.

PART TWO: WHEN YOUR CADET LEAVES FOR THE ACADEMY/June

1. Going to the Academy and the first days at the Academy

((Warning: some of the following is good for some cadets and not for others and most is NOT a requirement.))

CADETS SHOULD TAKE THESE ITEMS:

- A great attitude: Be determined to STAY/NEVER QUIT
- The packet of required paperwork and computer disk
- Any sports equipment needed for athletic tryouts
- Graphing calculator for AP test
- Clothing for several days (no attention-getting clothing)
- Comfortable shoes to stand in lines waiting for hours on end
- Clothing good to sweat in
- Personal items mentioned in part #2
- Bring a SENSE OF HUMOR and don't take anything PERSONAL.

Important: Review once more any instructions sent by USAFA

A. At the Airport.

Remember the government issued ID (usually a driver's license) & ticket to board the airplane.

Take food and cameras and more SASEs with you to the airport.

Urge your cadet to wear to the airport and/or In-Processing a plain shirt with a collar, so the boot straps won't rub the back of the neck and s/he will blend in with others.

Look for other cadets wearing their boots around their necks (It's a badge of honor and instant camaraderie). And step back and let your cadet start meeting classmates.

Give your cadet a final memory of you encouraging her/him along—and being happy about the future (you can fall apart later when the cadet can't see you and be torn up about your crying.)

B. At In-Processing (sometimes a 12-hour process) Encourage your cadet to...

Use the B&B program the night before In-Processing and send a disposable camera with a stamped mailing envelope so the family can take photos and mail back to you.

Arrive early to start In-Processing, but not be the first.

Join the Sponsor Family Program where a local Colorado family will "adopt" cadets into their home for weekends and special happenings.

Take all the Advanced Placement Tests possible (bring a graphing or scientific calculator for the math ones and to BCT)

Give the Academy permission to speak to a parent about certain issues and to get report card grades. Decide if both or one of divorced parents should receive info.

Call home when given the chance, and you be ready to record that message! To be listened to a lot!

Wear comfortable shoes and the agreed-upon clothing for easy spotting—most importantly clothing ok acceptable to sweat in. Bring bottled water and sunscreen.

"Just try or you'll regret every time you give up."

C. During BCT Encourage your cadet to...

Write at least once a week, even if it is only a sentence (esp for those going in straight from high school because –according to my cadet: “your mom is probably freaking out.”)

Eat whatever is put in front of them during BCT (nutrition is so important).

Keep hydrated (at least 8 glasses of water and never pass up a drinking fountain).

Join SPIRE, a non-denominational worship time on Wednesday evenings during BCT

(sometimes this is the only contact a parent will get during BCT; as the SPIRE leaders e-mail photos of the meetings back to the families). It is also a good break from training. SPIRE is a highlight for parents and cadets. NOTE: BCT 2005, SPIRE was cancelled, but it might be back on for 2006.

Go to the Academy Chapel to re-center him/herself and remind why s/he is there.

Learn people’s names quickly, esp. his/her flight members.

Look for ways to be a team. TEAMWORK is very important during BCT.

Blend in/stay below the radar screen/Be one of the crowd during BCT. Return to the achieving ways after BCT.

Get medical help when the problem is small & fixable. It can make a big difference if checked early and could make the difference on being given a Medical Turn-Back and/or getting a slow start to the Academic school year. Fixing a solvable medical problems is not “weak.” Balance this, though, with going overboard for medial assistance or worse—making up stuff—and being labeled a “slug.”

Recognize homesickness and know even tough people get it sometime in their lives. It is normal and just something else to get through by concentrating on the goals.

Again: Keep a sense of humor and not to take anything personally.

2. PARENTS GOING TO INPROCESSING and/or ACCEPTANCE

Make sure you have handy the Acceptance letter, insurance card and car registration material –even if you are renting a car, or you might not get on the Academy grounds. Carry one of the copies of the In-Processing paperwork with you (just in case your cadet needs it during In-Processing) Check on the security level of the Academy by looking on the USAFA website.

Take the Appointee Book, the Association of Graduates Parent Handbook (for phone numbers), fully-charged cameras, fully-charged cell phones, disposable cameras, binoculars, sunscreen, water, and hat. Be ready to wait for hours for a glimpse.

Work out with your cadet on how to recognize you (such as you will wear a specified color or wave something special, like a poster, balloon, banner, at the Swearing In Ceremony or Shoulder Board pinning. Likewise, know for sure what s/he is wearing for In-Processing. On the off chance you might get to visit with your cadet, agree on a location and spot, such as a certain statue, not on the Academy campus.

At In-Processing, pick up available literature and try to learn the BCT squadron your cadet will be in—put that info on letters to speed up their delivery during BCT.

Take advantage of the Visitor’s Center to do your AFA souvenirs/gift shopping list.

If possible, drive around the Academy grounds to orient yourself (no straight roads!).

Also, realize you may or may not see your cadet and you may or may not have the chance to visit with him or her at all. It is a bonus if you do.

Make friends at the wall, so you can help each other spot your cadets and share advantage spots for photos.

PART THREE: AFTER YOUR CADET LEAVES....

DURING THE FIRST MONTHS AFTER YOUR DOOLIE HAS LEFT FOR USAFA

(Remember change is constant and what worked one year may not be relevant this year and it has to fit your cadet!)

DOOLIE DAY OUT (tentative break between BCTI and BCTII)

The Doolies usually go to a Sponsor's house to rest, eat, take a break and sometime make a call home. Stand by and be patient for that call, because several other cadets will be calling from that same home and calling several people, not just parents.

Send a phone card to the cadet to use to make THE phone call.

Stay by your phone to get THE phone call from your Doolie (and adjust to Colorado's Time Zone).

Draw up a list of questions, but don't ask too many questions....let the Doolie open up.

Keep paper by the phone to make notes.

Tape record the telephone call.

Use your speaker phone for part of the call.

Think about inviting your Doolie's friends over for THE call and let each chat for 5 or so minutes, and then share afterwards.

Take photos for your scrapbook—even send a disposable camera with a SASE to the Sponsor family—if known ahead of time. Sometimes, cadets are just put in any car as the various sponsors pull up and then during the school year, the Sponsors and Cadets are formally matched.

Make sure you have the Sponsor family's info to send a thank you afterwards.

Be good listeners. Be Positive. Be the shoulder to lean on.

Possible Questions—let the spontaneity of your cadet guide the conversations.

The questions are just jump-starters

“Who are your roommates (get exact spellings of names)?

“How are the inspections going?

“Tell me about your Cadres? The experiences? The daily activities?

“How big is your dorm room?

“What kinds of things do you do at night?

“What kinds of things have been issued to you?

“Finish this statement: The most fun I have had is.... The most awesome person is...

1. Encourage your Cadet to succeed at the Academy

Keep your phone conversations upbeat (don't mention many things the cadet is missing out on—s/he gets enough of that from friends attending “normal” college).

Always tell your cadet how proud you are.

Send mail, even as much as daily. And plan for daily mail during the so-called ‘Dark Days’ of January and February when the cold and short days seem relentless. (I addressed about 60 envelopes at once, stamped them all and then filled with fun stuff. This way I always had a letter ready to go out to the mailbox on my way to work. Collecting fun stuff until the next round. Then as I started to run short, I repeated. Addressed about 60 envelopes...)

Send fun articles, jokes, comic strips, inspirational messages, thin candy or gum, local news stories, reprinted photos.

Be careful of sending a message of guilt (“I can't do anything without you around here”) or doubts (“Your girlfriend might be cheating on you”).

Encourage your cadet to make good friends and find advocates, as the Academy is a difficult place to “go it alone.” Team work is emphasized and support groups for the cadets is important. Encourage your cadet to attend Extra Instruction (EI), even if s/he doesn’t think he needs it (The Academy’s tutoring sessions). About half of the Cadets will end up on some kind of Academic Probation (Acc-Pro) and be required to submit a plan to raise their grades. Perhaps, even attend Summer School in place of a summer assignment or visit home. Attending EI before being placed on Acc-Pro shows very well. Plus, the bonus is getting to know the Professors or Teaching Assistants better.

2. Comforting Your Cadet

From time to time, your cadet will tell you how unhappy s/he is. Just listen. By the time you read the letter or by the end of the telephone conversation, the cadet will have lessened the burden and returned to normal. Often, you are the only person your cadet can complain to. Just listen and reflect back what the cadet is saying. Careful about giving advice, because often they just want an ear, not a problem-solver.

Don’t dwell on the conversation or on the letter because the “crisis” will have blown over by the time you know about it. If you are really upset, then wait overnight to call the ALO, a USAFA grad/friend, or a Parents Club friend, or write a trusted friend on the FamNet. Even go to FamNet’s “Help my Cadet wants to Out-Process” for advice. Do not call your cadet’s AOC, anymore than you would call your spouse’s boss.

If you are really alarmed because your cadet is threatening to harm him/herself, etc, then call the Chaplains Office at 719-333-AMEN immediately. The Chaplain can go to your cadet to talk and these conversations are private. Make sure your cadet knows s/he can go to talk to a chaplain any time. While your cadet may burst with anger at you for so-called interfering, deep-down your cadet will be relieved you care so much and that others care, too.

3. Girlfriends/Boyfriends of the Cadet

Encourage the person to join Friendsnet, a listserv of FamNet, as others will counsel these young people better than you and guide them to better decisions.

Make sure the ‘friend is supportive of the cadet and his/her goals. Think about holding group discussions about this with your cadet present. After all that hard work of getting into the Academy, a couple of “I miss you and I don’t like the separation” messages and all can be undone.

Emphasize to your cadet to never give up his/her dreams for someone else unless that person is giving up something as equally important.

Keep the relationship friendly when the cadet is gone, because often cadets will tell their friends more than they tell you.

If you are taking the friend to the Academy, establish ahead of time, His/Her/Our time with the cadet. Sharing is a must!

There is the 2% club: only 2% of the cadets end up still dating their high school

Sweethearts at graduation. If the ‘friend isn’t a winner, don’t worry because s/he won’t last. If the friend is a winner, then your cadet is very lucky.

4. Do Not Forget the Siblings, Spouse (or the pet!)

As we spend time worrying and talking about the cadet, we can often neglect our other children and even our spouse. Even the pets need extra sympathy.

Figure special ways to spend special time with your family.

Limit your time on the computer, reviewing things about your cadet.

Mention the other children in your conversations.

5. The Computer

Avoid using IM too much with your cadet, as your cadet really needs to concentrate on being at the Academy, not what is going on at home. Time is precious. Even limit your telephone calls, too.

For that matter, do not send out lengthy or bulky e-mails to your cadet's Academy e-mail address, as the cadet is responsible for anything sent to the account by the Academy, even if the e-mailbox is full.

Strongly urge your cadet to back up the files on his/her laptop OFTEN, as it can be blown or lost.

Think about having equipment and software similar to your cadet's when you replace your computer system.

Think about getting a printer for your cadet's first year that is similar to the one at home; one the cadet is already familiar with.

Each cadet room should have its own printer, because the squadron computer can get jammed, overworked, out of paper, etc and is in the public view. The squadron printers are only for school and military work. Often roommates will share the costs of one printer and they are usually glad they have their own private printer.

6. Good Information for Yourself

Read thoroughly the Appointee Guide and keep it handy

You can get guides from the AOG, USAFA, and some clubs, such as the Colorado Parents Club hand out their own guides.

Start folders to keep info.

Gift Ideas, Contacts, Graduation Advice, Parents Weekend advice, Things to do in Colorado, Academics, Package Ideas,

Bookmark the USAFA website, and the AOG website, esp their photo pages, and your Parents Club in your Internet Favorites.

Some people subscribe to the base newspaper, The Academy Spirit.
www.gowdyprints.usa.to/spirit.html

Sign up for Google media alerts related to the Academy (and the other Academies as well, as those stories are very interesting, too)

FamNet can be very helpful (but take its rumors with a grain of salt). It takes time to sift through the 100 postings/a day. About every 10th one will be useful to you.

You can subscribe to: Air Force News. <http://www.af.mil/subscribe/>

Here's a link from falconpride.com to check the weather at USAFA:

http://www.wunderground.com/US/CO/USAF_Academy.html

Hesitate subscribing to the Colorado Springs Newspaper, Rocky Mountain Gazette, as its so-called "news" stories about the Academy are very negative & will enrage you.

From time to time, the Cadet Wing Media Publications makes publications and videotapes available to parents (esp the BCT yearbook and video)

Request material from the Colorado Springs Tourist Board www.pikes-peak.com

Purchase (unofficial Academy videotog) Sal diMatteo's dvds.

Learn the Military terms and Cadet code words and the names of Air Force dignitaries & founders and AF base locations.

Read books about the Military and Academy. Esp Duty First by Ed Ruggero, Absolute American by David Lipskey and Into the Mouth of the Cat by Malcom McConnell (about USAFA Grad and Viet Nam POW Lance Sijan)

Also, scan Contrails, the AOG's booklet of knowledge.

Remember: Your cadet is not alone and neither are you. Because the first year is a tough year on everyone, accept support and ruminate on these suggestions and keep a positive attitude. 37,000 cadets have graduated from USAFA and so can yours!

Compiled by Donda Thomason
SETXAFAPA